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A Church On The Move: A History Of First Baptist Church Clemson 1907-2006

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A CHURCH ON THE MOVE: A HISTORY OF
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CLEMSON
1907-2006

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Lawson Brumbach Clary
December 2006

Accepted by:
Dr. Roger Grant, Committee Chair
Dr. Rod Andrew
Dr. Abel Bartley

ABSTRACT

The purpose of First Baptist Clemson's founding was two fold, to provide a body of worship for college students at Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina and to reach the Clemson community. The main focus of the church at its inception was to reach out to students, but as the church and school grew, so, too, did the need for the church to expand its ministries.

Throughout the history of First Baptist Clemson, the church never compromised on its traditions and values under pressure from the community or outside forces. In every situation the church held strong in its beliefs. During times of crisis the church has looked inward to find strength and this is demonstrated by its longevity in a transient environment, like a college campus. This study of First Baptist Clemson is focused on examining the church's relationship with the University and the community.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving wife Michelle, my son Hudson, and my father and mother, Gary and Pat Clary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my family for all of the support that they have given me to finish my second Master's degree. Most importantly, I want to thank my wife, Michelle, and my father, Gary, for the support not only verbally, but financially that they have given me. Michelle, thank you for working full time while I went to school full time for the last four years, you are an amazing woman and I love you very much. Dad, words can't express how lucky I am to have a father that values education and has supported me throughout my academic odyssey. I also want to thank my mother, Pat, for her constant encouragement and listening ear to my boring explanations about my project. I would also like to thank my sister, Adair, for her continuing support on my quest for academic success. Finally, I would like to thank Dean and Debbie for their patience, and support of my continual stress on me. Thanks for all of your support from everyone!

I also want to thank the people of First Baptist Clemson for their support and guidance as I wrote their history. This work is not all encompassing, but I think it hits on the high notes of a rich and eventful history. I would especially like to thank the history committee, Dr. Todd Wilson, and Rev. Tim Willis. I

would also like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. H. Roger Grant for asking me challenging questions and truly seeking to understand church history with me and Dr. Rod Andrew and Dr. Abel Bartley in their constant encouragement to keep pushing on. I appreciate their guidance and support. Thank you for helping me make this history a reality!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A HISTORY OF FIRST BAPTIST CLEMSON

Local church history is difficult for an outsider to write. The focus must be to determine the pulse of the church and find what purpose the church has served over its history. That is the real purpose for church history: to educate members, community, and beyond of what the local church has done, not only the impact upon membership, but also upon the community.

Many times church histories are viewed as biased interpretations from a religious point-of-view. This is not true in the case of First Baptist Clemson and its history. The author has come from an outside community to examine First Baptist Clemson in an objective manner and has been free from influence of church members and staff.

With that being said, the history of Clemson University has been written about many times from the viewpoint of the impact of the university on the community. Yet few have considered the impact that churches had in forming a unified community of worship, reaching out, and providing services. This study will explore the history of First Baptist Church Clemson and how the church as a

whole affected the area of Clemson and the university from its beginning in 1907 to the present day. The work will explore how the church helped to expand the community and the student body, not only spiritually, but physically as well. To accomplish this, the coverage will include how the church cooperated and enhanced its relationship with the city and college of Clemson.

This is not the first history that has been written about First Baptist Clemson. Dr. Charles Arrington wrote a short but important study that covered the period between 1907 and 1957. His text included much of the early history that is found in the following work, largely because many of the records that he used have now been lost or misplaced. His short history provides insight and inspiration to seek to find a deeper and more meaningful understanding of First Baptist Clemson.

The purpose of this thesis is not to provide a month-by-month representation of what has transpired over the past century of service at First Baptist Clemson. Instead, several themes dominate its history, beginning with the concept of serving. The founding principle of the church was to provide the cadets of Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina a place to worship. From that point the church practiced an open door policy to all students. Another dominant theme throughout the text is the ecumenical nature of the First Baptist Clemson. The church did not isolate itself from other denominations

and beliefs; instead, it welcomed them and learned from them. Progressivism is one of the primary themes that is spread throughout the work. First Baptist Clemson has always been a leader against some traditional views and receptive to new ideas and viewpoints. This was especially demonstrated in its handling of civil rights and women's rights during the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. The church was an instrumental voice in change and openness in the Clemson religious community.

It is important when studying a Baptist church that the reader understands the Baptist denomination. To make sense of First Baptist Clemson, everyone must recognize the purpose of the Southern Baptist Convention and what it believes.

Southern Baptist Beliefs and Hierarchy

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), founded in 1846 in Augusta, Georgia, originally formed out of the General Baptist convention primarily over the issue of slavery. This split left the Southern Baptist Convention in the South and the Northern Baptist Convention to the North. The SBC is different from other denominations in its beliefs and hierarchy. Each church within the convention is allowed to practice the principle of autonomy. This means that the church can hold different theological points from other churches and still belong to the Convention, allowing every congregation a

sense of freedom in what members believe. Where problems arise is when these beliefs that are so drastically different cannot be resolved and a local body no longer wants to be associated with churches that do not share the same beliefs. During the 1970's and 1980's this is what happened to First Baptist Clemson.

Another important issue for Southern Baptists is the priesthood of believers. This concept explains that any member of the church can believe and understand the word of God and that the individual does not rely on a member of the clergy to interpret the word or provide confession for his sins. As one recent denominational statement explains:

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.¹

This concept gives Baptists a different view of the church and of the pastor than most denominations. The pastor is viewed as a shepherd of the flock who is to teach and lead but not to be held in higher esteem than any one else in the congregation because everyone is considered equal in God's sight.

¹ "Baptist Faith and Message 2000," (Atlanta, GA: Southern Baptist Convention, 2000), 1.

The leadership of the SBC is made up of several different committees and an acting president. The real power of the convention is with the voting delegates that are sent annually to the SBC. At this week-long meeting thousands of these messengers from local Southern Baptist Churches gather to discuss and vote on articles of faith and other church-government issues. These individuals hold the real power because they are the voting members that make the decisions on behalf of the SBC. In reality, the organization only exists once a year during this week-long gathering. Amendments that are passed during the Convention are enacted and local churches are asked to abide by these decisions.

The SBC is also broken down into state conventions that have a governing body. Until the 1980's, First Baptist Clemson operated under the supervision of the South Carolina State Baptist Convention. The headquarters, located in Columbia, are where much of the decisions concerning the state's Baptist churches are decided. As the South Carolina State Baptist Convention website explains, "Through the General Board (now Executive Board) of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, a commitment was made to intentionally serve churches based on the needs of each individual church and God's vision for its

ministries.”² The State Convention is the general overseer of the churches in the respective states of the Southern Baptist denomination.

The next step down in the hierarchy of the Southern Baptist Convention is the association. There are forty-three Baptist Associations in South Carolina that cover all forty-six counties. These units are important because they provide a voice for the churches as well as a support group, either financially or through supply preaching, for churches in their surrounding area. In 1976, First Baptist Clemson was one of the first churches to leave the Saluda Baptist Association, but prior to the exodus First Baptist Clemson had been an active member, hosting several meetings and providing a substantial funding.³

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Hierarchy

In 1991, First Baptist Clemson became a member of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). The hierarchy of the CBF is not entirely different from that of the SBC. There is more emphasis placed on the autonomy of the local church. “We believe in the autonomy of every local church,” explains the CBF. “We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine

² <http://www.scbaptist.org/-1999998618>, (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Baptist Convention, 2005), 1.

³ Ibid.

their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.”⁴ This is something that First Baptist Clemson sought throughout the battles with the Saluda Baptist Association and the SBC. Though the CBF supports the autonomy of the local church, the hierarchy descends much like the SBC. The CBF has a large national body that meets annually at various locations. The CBF also has state-run agencies for its churches, and the organization provides support to seminary students and to churches in the state CBF.

The CBF also has the associational level that is much more loosely tied than that of the SBC, but focuses on meeting the needs of local churches. First Baptist Clemson is a member of the Covenant Baptist Association of the CBF. The associational groups are not for governance but for assistance to aid one another with missions and finances. The focus of the CBF is to have churches to worship freely and to permit them to be a part of a larger body. This allows First Baptist Clemson not only to have a freedom but a support system of like-minded churches.

⁴ “Core Values: Baptist Principles,” (Atlanta, GA: Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, 2005), 1.

First Baptist Clemson Hierarchy

The modern First Baptist Clemson has a different hierarchy from mainstream SBC churches. Whereas many churches are pastor- or deacon-led First Baptist Clemson practices a congregation-led church.⁵ This is not a new form of church organization. Indeed there is an entire denomination, Congregationalists, which is today's United Church of Christ, that practices this type of church leadership, and there are other groups that follow this practice as well. This is quite a reversal from the SBC's form of church organization. Below the congregation, the pastor, deacons, and other committees help the leadership process. This type of checks and balances allows First Baptist Clemson to run much like a democratic society. This does not mean that the pastor is meaningless; he is still a vital leader within the church along with the staff. The church personnel lead the congregation, which ultimately makes the decisions.

First Baptist Clemson is unique compared to many of the Baptist churches in the South. The congregation votes on the policy of the church and that is how much of the church governance is dictated. Deacons have a vital role in the leadership as well, making pivotal decisions on many of the important matters. The majority of the decisions of the church are formulated and decided upon in

⁵ For organizational chart of First Baptist Clemson see Figure 1.

the various committees. Some cover the finances and building and grounds, and other important committees allow the church to function properly. The final decision from all of these methods of leadership lands squarely on the shoulders of members.

Needless to say, the hierarchy of a Baptist church is hardly simplistic. There are checks and balances beginning on a national level that provide stability for the local church. The pastor and the deacons of First Baptist Clemson have been a stabilizing factor for this body, and true governance rests solely with the congregation.

CHAPTER II

STARTING WITH A PURPOSE

Normally writing the history of a local church would not be an exciting venture, but with First Baptist Clemson that is not the case. Over the past century, the church has built a reputation for not adhering to the status quo for a traditional Baptist body. It has followed the pulse of the congregation and because of that the church has created a rich tradition of activism and has had an impact in community life. While this study is not all encompassing, it does provide a reflection of what purpose First Baptist Clemson has served over the past century in the small community of Clemson, South Carolina.

The Formation of the College at Clemson

In order to understand the formation of Clemson College Baptist Church it is essential to understand the purpose of Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina and its origins. Calhoun was a village in northwest South Carolina. The railroad, the future Southern Railway, came through this small hamlet, Calhoun, that consisted primarily of John C. Calhoun's nearby plantation. And there was another carrier, the Blue Ridge Railway, that ran

between Columbia, South Carolina, and Walhalla, South Carolina, and at one time planned to push further to the northwest.⁶ Thomas Green Clemson, son-in-law of Calhoun, and without direct heirs, left the land to the South Carolina Legislature. Thus in 1889, groundbreaking took place and construction began on the new campus. The school was built for the purpose of educating the male children of poor farmers in the state. In 1893, the goal of the South Carolina Legislature came to fruition with the official opening of CAC.

Quickly CAC and other colleges throughout the United States realized the importance of religion on campuses as a form of maintaining order and morality among students. Several large institutions, with the first being the University of Michigan, began instituting the practice of having campus ministers to maintain religiosity among students. It did not take long for CAC also to realize the value of the practice. The College hired four ministers from local churches to conduct on campus services and attend to the cadets in their barracks. The CAC realized the validity of religion as a form of social control for the cadets, and therefore encouraged it through supporting local ministry to these young men. The college instituted a campus-wide policy of mandatory attendance for students at the church of their denomination or they would have to report to an assigned room

⁶ J. H. Mitchell, "The Romance of the Blue Ridge Railway," Master's Thesis, Clemson University, 1992.

on campus. Because of the rise in higher education institutions, denominations realized the validity of placing churches on college campuses. The Methodist Episcopal Church, was the first to attempt to reach college campuses by planting churches near colleges throughout America. The churches attracted students through youth organizations in the church or in campus organizations.⁷

Baptist cadets at CAC were approximately 250 out of a student body of 658 in 1907, and had to remain on campus and attend the services because there was not a nearby Baptist church. The lack of transportation limited these students' mobility to attend a Baptist church outside the immediate campus. The issue of not having a Baptist place to worship was a strong issue for the idea of planting a church in Clemson.

The formation of Clemson College Baptist church was one of necessity and vision. Thomas Clemson was a progressive educator who wanted to educate young men through the study of agriculture and engineering and to instill discipline in the cadets through military activities. The College sought to improve the life of the "dirt" farmers by providing an avenue through which their families could attain an education at low cost.

⁷ Wright Bryan, Clemson: An Informal History of the University 1889-1979 (Columbia, South Carolina: The R.L. Bryan Company, 1979), 87. Campus Organizations included: Baptist Student Union, Canterbury Episcopal Society, Wesleyan Society, and the Newman Catholic Society. The Methodist church was losing members quickly at the turn of the century and developed the strategy of founding churches and campus groups near college campuses to attract young people.

Clemson Agricultural College was founded in a rural environment and because of this a town was forced to develop around the school to meet the needs of cadets and faculty. With this growth came several institutions such as a post office, firehouse, stores, and religious organizations. Fort Hill Presbyterian Church, organized in 1895, was the first church in the community. Shortly thereafter, the Protestant Episcopal Church was founded, but it was not until the early 1900's that the idea of a Baptist Church for Clemson was born.

The Founding of Clemson College Baptist Church

It was critical that a Baptist church be established in Clemson; after all, there was nothing to offer students of the Baptist faith except other denominational churches. T. G. Poats, one of the founding members of Clemson College Baptist Church, explained, "Until the spring of 1907 the Baptists of Clemson College had lagged behind their more active brethren, the Episcopalians and Presbyterians, in denominational enterprise. Not that their members were smaller or less able to support a church, but chiefly because no one had yet appeared to act as a leader and assume the responsibility in forming a church."⁸ It was during this time period of the early 1900's that denominational

⁸ T. G. Poats, "A Brief Historical Sketch of the Clemson College Baptist Church," (Clemson, SC: Clemson College Baptist Church, March 15, 1912), 1.

lines became clearly drawn. Baptist students did not attend Presbyterian churches or any other denomination, for that matter. That was why it was so pressing for Clemson to have a Baptist church for students. It was not just a single leader who felt the need to found the church; instead, the church was established by a group of prominent and powerful people in Clemson. Explained Charles Arrington, "During the fall of 1906 and 1907 the matter was taken up and discussed informally by Dr. P.H. Mell, President of Clemson Agricultural College, and a few of the faculty members with reference, particularly to our obligations to the many college boys from Baptist families, and the importance of this point as the seat of a mission church of the Baptist denomination."⁹

The church did not waste time in hiring a spiritual leader. In 1908 members quickly engaged the services of Thomas V. McCaul, a pastor from a church in Orange, Virginia. Dr. McCaul was about to leave his church in Virginia and come to the fledgling church in Clemson when fire destroyed the building in Orange. He felt he could not leave a congregation in need and so Clemson waited for him.¹⁰ The patience that the church practiced would pay dividends with the high quality leadership that McCaul brought to the congregation.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Charles Arrington, A History of the Clemson Baptist Church: 1907-1957 (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1957), 7.

During the uncertainty of the calling of Pastor McCaul, the church floundered. But once McCaul arrived, he and church leaders felt it important to become part of a local church body. In 1910 the church became an official member of the Saluda Baptist Association. The Association stated, "Churches desiring to unite with this Association were invited to do so. A letter was presented from the Baptist church at Clemson which was referred to a committee consisting of J. F. Vines, I.W. Wingo, and L. J. Bristow with instruction to report this afternoon." It did not take long for the committee to reach a unanimous decision, "The committee to whom was referred the application of the church at Clemson, recommended its reception into this body,"¹¹ and this occurred on August 2, 1910.

The hiring of a full-time pastor and the funds to build a building could not have been done completely by the church. The congregation consisted of some prominent members, several professors and town leaders, who encouraged the college to supplement some of the funding. Thomas Grayson Poats, Dr. Alexander Redfern, Dr. Samuel Broadus Earle, and other leaders and faculty members led the church with vision to reach not just the cadets but also the larger community.

¹¹ "Saluda Associational Minutes-1910-1919," (Greenville, South Carolina: Baptist History Collection, Furman University, 1919), 5.

Clemson College Baptist Church was not content just to take from the college. The congregation was more than willing to give back to the school and that was the focus from the start. The body had an immediate impact on the campus and students from its inception as is evidenced in the correspondence of George C. Riser of Whitmer, South Carolina. In the letter, written in 1910, Riser explained the death of his son, a Clemson graduate. While at Clemson he studied electrical engineering and chose this as his profession once he obtained his degree. The letter explained that in October 1909 the young man was working on a project in Great Falls, South Carolina, which was near his hometown, when he was suddenly electrocuted. He survived for a day and then passed away. His father went on to explain that he loved God and his church, and most importantly he loved Clemson. The young man was passionate as he would defend Clemson whether it was the school or the church. Riser continued on to explain that the day that he had received the letter from Pastor T. V. McCaul, pertaining to the needs of Clemson College Baptist Church, his wife was going through her son's clothes and found two-dollar bills in a small pocket of the pants that the young man wore when he died. "Know how he loved the college and how delighted he would have been to see a Baptist church at Clemson, I

want to give the Two Dollars for that purpose,” explained Riser.¹² These bills that were removed from his pockets were the same bills that were used to launch the building fund at Clemson College Baptist Church. Riser pointed out that he wished that Pastor McCaul would announce before the congregation the purpose and the price that was paid for this money. Riser prayed that this would encourage others to contribute and to give earnestly to the cause of the Clemson church. “They belonged to one God-loving soul, and I pray that they might help to bring others to give of their means.” Riser added that his home church in Whitmer would take up an offering the following week to help the cause of Clemson College Baptist Church and then he promised that more money would follow.¹³ The idea that a father of a dead son would care enough to write a letter and send money for a Baptist church to be started in Clemson is testimony to the great need that there was for Baptist cadets to have a house of worship.

The church impacted Clemson from the beginning, being revealed through the records of the Saluda Associational minutes from 1910 through 1919. From the start, twenty-three members gave a great deal of their offering to local and foreign missions. These individuals sacrificed many times the improvement

¹² George C. Riser to Clemson College Baptist Church, March 23, 1910.

¹³ Ibid.

of the church for the betterment of the community and beyond. They gave far above the regular gifts of missions offerings when compared to the other churches in the association of like size. Numerous times the church would devote an entire offering to relief work for the poor and the needy.

A Focus on the Cadets

Clemson College Baptist Church was founded with the main purpose to reach cadets of Clemson. That is the primary reason why Pastor T. V. McCaul worked so diligently with these men through ministering to their spiritual needs. McCaul and other leaders in the church recognized that many cadets required supplies that their families could not provide because of distance and lack of finances.

The church did not settle at providing solely the material needs for the students. The congregation also sought to create opportunities for spiritual guidance. During the infant year of the church congregates would visit the cadets regularly. As a direct reflection of the efforts a large majority of the cadets from the college began to come to the services that were offered. A large influence, of course, on their decision was that there was compulsory attendance.

Since church attendance was mandatory, some of the cadets attended only for that reason. There was a continual epidemic of the cadets showing up for roll call at the church sanctuary and escaping into the woods to wander around,

completely missing the worship service.¹⁴ One time Pastor McCaul reflected on student attendance, explaining, “Sometimes I stood at my window in the rear of the church just before entering the pulpit and after I had heard the roll call by companies in the front of the church, I would see several cadets sneak out of line and slip around the building right under my window and hit the dirt for the woods. I used to wave at them and tell them that I did not much blame them.”¹⁵ Overall, the compulsory attendance did much to cement a relationship between church and school.

During the 1930’s compulsory attendance was eventually phased out, but that did not deter Clemson College Baptist Church from attempting to reach cadets. The student minister gave a report to the deacons on December 2, 1946, stating, “Mr. Spangenburg gave an encouraging report of the student work showing a splendid increase in attendance at all church services by the students and a very fine showing on their part in contributions to the church.”¹⁶ After World War II, enrollment at Clemson College rose rapidly, numbering more than 3,000 students. Attendance in Sunday School at the church responded

¹⁴ Wright Bryan, Clemson: An Informal History of the University 1889-1979 (Columbia, South Carolina: The R.L. Bryan Company, 1979), 87.

¹⁵ Charles Arrington, A History of Clemson Baptist Church: 1907-1957 (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1957), 17.

¹⁶ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, Dec. 2, 1946), 1.

accordingly, growing from an average of 140 in Sunday School during the 1920's to almost 350 during the early 1940's. This increase was due in large part to the influx of veterans returning to finish their degrees and new students launching their college careers. This sudden growth not only brought a larger number of people to the church but allowed it to become financially stable. This was a dramatic change from the Great Depression and the tight budget that the church had to keep. The state convention supplemented the salary of the pastor, which ranged between \$1,200 and \$2,000 during the late 1920's, and the local salary had increased only a minimal amount over the first twenty years of existence.

There was a constant struggle within the church on the best way to reach cadets and the community. Much of the burden was placed upon the pastor, deacons, and Women's Missionary Union (WMU) members. The deacons were constantly discussing what the next method must be to attract Clemson students. In a 1949 meeting, the deacons provided a framework through which to reach the men. The first involved having an adult meet regularly with the Baptist Student Union (BSU). BSU was organized to provide students a chance to meet together at their respective institutions and hold Bible studies, service projects, and fellowship activities. During the late 1940's, the church planned to reach out to the community as a whole and hold a "religious emphasis week" hosted by the church in order to allow the cadets and community to see the diversity of

religion in Clemson. At “religious emphasis week” the community came together to talk about different forms of worship. This discussion was comprised of mainstream protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic faith. The third method was to send an adult to meet each week with every company of cadets and invite them to attend worship services.¹⁷ By June 10, 1950, the efforts were working, and the church reported that 216 students were enrolled in church activities. This was one of the largest student groups in the area, if not the state.¹⁸ The congregation continued on with its vision of attracting cadets, having continually planned evangelism drives.¹⁹ “It was decided,” according to the deacons,” that we would visit the barracks immediately following the next meeting for the purpose of inviting the boys to the various church activities.”²⁰ The deacons knew that they could not just offer a regular service, so in addition to the service they had, student activities and Sunday School kept the students interested and ready to come back to the church.

¹⁷ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, November 8 1949), 1.

¹⁸ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, June 10 1950), 1.

¹⁹ Evangelism Drives were formed to invite cadets to the church and share with them about the purpose of the church. These drives were great outreach events for the church to reach the community of Clemson and proclaim their mission as a church.

²⁰ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, April 30 1950), 1.

The Impact of the WMU

Clemson College Baptist Church was one of the front-runners in allowing women to take an active role. In 1912 the congregation launched the Women's Missionary Union and the group became a faithful and earnest giver to the state convention and foreign missions. The WMU played an active role in serving the Clemson community, and was instrumental in reaching the freshman cadets. The WMU developed a Young Woman's Auxiliary (YWA) that provided young women an opportunity for local and foreign outreach programs. During the 1910's, Mrs. B. F. Robertson was the leader of the WMU and founder of the YWA, playing an instrumental part in helping to give women purpose in this rural area. Robertson attended many of the early associational meetings and provided a voice for the WMU in the Saluda Association.

Clemson was an all-male institution; therefore, collegiate education was not available for females in the community unless they left for colleges like Lander or Furman Women's College. Still, the church offered women of the community a chance for service. In the first year of its existence the WMU consisted of ten women who were church activists.²¹ During World War II the organization did not fade away with the exodus of the cadets and faculty.

²¹ "Saluda Baptist Associational Minutes- 1910-1919," (Greenville, South Carolina: Baptist History Collection, Furman University, 1919), 20.

Instead the church women assumed a more active role in leadership and community action. They provided more for the few students at Clemson because of the growing numbers that were being sent overseas. After the conflict the women's group became active in fundraising and focusing on helping war-ravaged Europe. The organization pushed for the church to give an entire offering to the effort to rebuild Europe. This was quite a step of faith for a body that was not brimming with wealth during the post-war rebuilding period.²² Pastor Harold Cole jumped behind the effort and in July 1946 the church took up only one offering that day, and gave it all to the international rebuilding effort.

This was not the only time that the church designated entire offerings to a cause. The next month the congregation dedicated an entire offering to the South Carolina Alcoholic Board, a private institution at the time that was focused on aiding those stricken with alcoholism, to help with its funding and purpose.²³ During the 1950's the most important activity for the WMU involved support for the Connie Maxwell Orphanage, located in Greenwood, South Carolina. In July 1952, members presented to the deacons an entire offering to the orphanage. The heart of the WMU was to give and help the misfortunate. After World War II this was most evident with the organizations push to help people in need.

²² "Deacon's Minutes," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, July 1946), 1.

²³ "Deacon's Minutes," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, August 1946), 1.

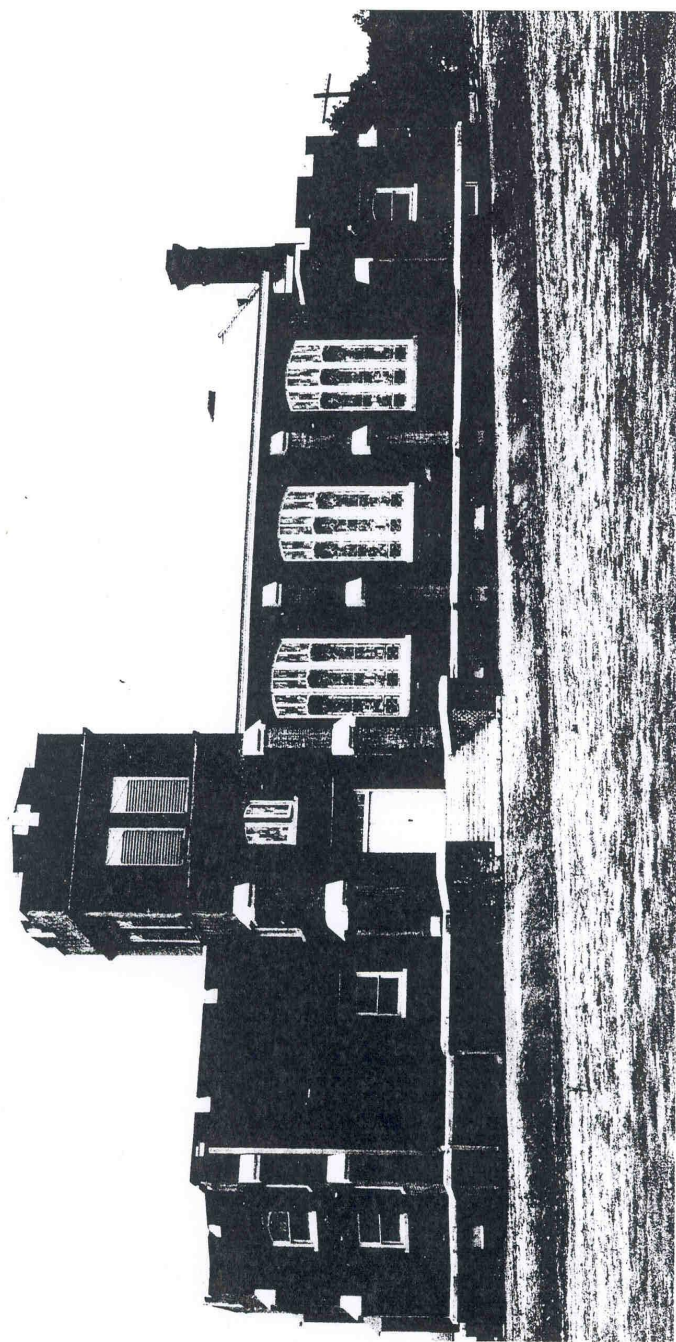
One of the integral parts of Clemson College Baptist Church was the formation of circles. Circles were small groups of church women that would meet weekly. Adult women of all ages could be involved in these regular gatherings. They discussed important issues that dealt with the betterment of the church, and they sought ways their circle could serve locally. These groups were not just for older female members. As Frances Rostrum explained, "We organized a younger women's circle. The circle was named for Mrs. Goode, the Lolly Goode Circle."²⁴ Once women became involved in circle, many became lifelong members. Recalled Jewel Lewellen, "The preacher asked me to join in the 1930's. And I joined for years and I am still a member."²⁵ The practice of the circle clubs helped to evolve the ministry of women in the church, providing them with leadership roles and affecting the community with their service. As the congregation grew, so did the number of circles and the number of participating women.

²⁴ "Frances Roston Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

²⁵ "Jewel Lewellen Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

The Never-Ending Theme of Service

In 1952 Clemson College Baptist Church became First Baptist Church Clemson. The name may have changed, yet the purpose remained the same. It still focused on meeting the needs of the Clemson community and most importantly the collegiate students. The first fifty years had been focused on reaching the school and community to invite as many as possible to worship, fellowship, and learn together as a body. During those first fifty years the church grew substantially and prospered, but overall its values remained intact.



BAPTIST CHURCH CLEMSON COLLEGE, S. C.

Figure 1. Old Clemson College Baptist Church

**“May it please him who giveth the increase to crown our labors with rich
reward in the years to come.”**

T.G. Poats 1912

CHAPTER III

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

As expressed in the previous chapter, the founding of Clemson College Baptist Church was not an easy task. It took the support of the college and the faculty for the body to succeed. This chapter will focus on the doctrines of the church, the vital role that the Bible has played, and how the church has applied these beliefs. The framework comes from a mission statement in 1997 that the Reconciliation team of First Baptist Clemson formulated to define the purpose and continue on the tradition of the forefathers. "The mission of Clemson First Baptist Church is to: Honor the Lordship of Christ; Share the Good News; Minister in Love and Acceptance; and Support and Engage in Mission Outreach."²⁶ The following will examine how the congregation attempted and continued to achieve these goals.

To Honor the Lordship of Christ

From the start, the focus has been to reach as many people with the message of Jesus Christ. As written in the New Testament, in Matthew 28:20, "go

²⁶ "First Baptist Church Reconciliation Team Minutes," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1997), 3.

out and baptize.” This was epitomized in 1910 at the Saluda Baptist Associational meeting, when the church was recognized and accepted into the association as a church of the Gospel to share and preach the word.²⁷ This meant that the body had been commissioned to share the biblical principles that are found throughout the Bible. In the late Nineteenth century the Saluda Baptist Association was formed to aid churches within the association, whether through financial means, interim preaching, or providing supplies. The association consisted of churches from the area of southern Pickens County and much of neighboring Anderson County. Clemson College Baptist Church was the first church from the local area to join; indeed, it was the only Baptist church locally.

Clemson College Baptist Church was an institution focused on reaching the community and providing support. McCaul expressed that the vision was to reach the students of Clemson for Christ and encourage Baptists state wide to assist members by building a church to accomplish this goal. Pastor McCaul stated that, “My first obligation as pastor of the newly organized Baptist church was to raise funds with which to erect a church edifice. It seemed that the State Mission Board could not or would not do this; and so it necessitated my undertaking the task individually.” And he added, “I undertook the task of

²⁷ “Saluda Associational Minutes-1910-1919,” (Greenville, South Carolina: Baptist History Collection, Furman University, 1919), 10.

preaching in Baptist churches all over the state on Sundays and asking for special offerings for the Building Fund of the church through cooperation and kindness of pastors and people.”²⁸

The beginning of the building fund was actually done by other churches in South Carolina to help support the congregation with the vital mission to honor the Lordship of Christ. On September 11, 1913, the cornerstone was set in place in downtown Clemson and within walking distance to the campus. Pastor McCaul challenged the congregation to realize the gravity of the situation by preaching a sermon, “The World’s Great Magnet,” from John 12:32.²⁹ By November 23, 1913, a substantial amount of money had been accumulated and soon the \$16,000, 500-seat main auditorium took shape and opened for use. The sanctuary was built larger than any of the sanctuaries of other denominations in Clemson at the time. Pastor McCaul and church members possessed enough vision and optimism to realize that they needed a large sanctuary to house the students and church members that eventually would fill this house of worship. The edifice, located across Goode Street from the permanent structure in downtown Clemson, was an attractive brick structure that featured large

²⁸ Charles Arrington, A History of First Baptist Clemson: 1907-1957 (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1957), 11.

²⁹ T.V. McCaul, Letter by T.V. McCaul (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, September 11, 1913), 1.

windows that would be opened for summer worship services so as to give a respite to the cadets in their hot, wool uniforms. The sides were filled with large windows that could open easily to allow for ventilation and air- flow.³⁰ The building not only included the main sanctuary but other small rooms used for Sunday school and offices. The main entrance was on the front corner closest to the street.

Share the Good News

The early days of placing into practice “sharing the good news”³¹ were difficult because of a college town environment. In his memoirs Pastor McCaul indicated that “Sometimes work was rather discouraging, as students rarely think of expressing their feeling about religious efforts etc.”³² Yet he went on to note how his toiling in the pulpit and on campus was not all for naught. “I remember one session in particular when I felt so discouraged that I had made up my mind to accept an invitation to leave Clemson for the pastorate of a

³⁰ See Figure 1, pg. 7.

³¹ Sharing the Good News- This refers to the mandate given by Jesus of Nazareth in the gospel’s. He preached to go out to the world and tell the world the message of salvation in Matt. 28:19-20.

³² T.V. McCaul, Interview for Clemson College Baptist Church (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson), 5.

church elsewhere. But on Commencement day, one of my BYPU³³ boys called to tell me good-bye. I thanked him for coming by, and then with much hesitation he began to thank me for what I had done for him etc. . . and said, that he had decided to go to our Seminary in Louisville and prepare himself to become a missionary to China.”³⁴ McCaul further explained that the young man shared with him how the church and its pastor impacted the lives of students so much that three other young men were going into the mission field as well!

The process that saw young men and later women, in 1955, come to First Baptist Clemson as freshmen and leave with a vision to impact the world has been a mission of every pastor who stepped foot in the local pulpit. Pastor Charles Arrington, Dr. Roger Lovette, and Dr. Todd Wilson intentionally placed an emphasis on reaching students. That is why the church dedicated an entire position of Student Minister to focus solely on meeting the spiritual needs of the student body in the 1940's, beginning with Pastor Harold Cole. This post was created because of a push by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to maintain a Baptist presence on college campuses. The Clemson church received support

³³ This was a co-ed organization started by the South Carolina Baptist Convention for Young People out of high school in the work force or in college. The acronym stood for Baptist Young Person's Union.

³⁴ T.V. McCaul, Interview for Clemson College Baptist Church (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson), 5.

by the convention to not only hire Harold Cole but to have the Baptist Student Union located at the church. This opened up a new way to reach students.

Throughout the history of First Baptist Clemson, the congregation and not just the pastors have placed a premium on the members going out into the community and sharing the vision of the church. Members organized intentional evangelism, or “going out,” to tell cadets about the Bible. They reached the cadets through the adopt-a-student programs, special services, visitation, and other evangelistic outreach events. All of these programs were geared toward heightening awareness about the purpose of the church and to get students involved. The congregation has fulfilled this purpose since 1907, as stated in its history “Believing that God’s call to salvation is simultaneously the call to mission, we affirm every follower of Christ to be a minister.”³⁵ This has proven true over the years through the actions of the deacons, women’s organizations, and intentional evangelism. These activities have allowed the church to have an impact on the community and also to build a positive relationship with other churches in the Clemson area.

³⁵ First Baptist Clemson Mission Statement of History of the Church (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

The Ecumenical Nature of Clemson College Baptist
Church/First Baptist Clemson During the
1940's and early 1950's

As the community of Clemson grew in size during the 1940's, so did the local religious community. It was because of this that an ecumenical attitude toward religion was important in this type of atmosphere. The church was one of the frontrunners in the push for a "community of worship." This began in 1946 with its help with the rebuilding effort in Western Europe. This was an ecumenical effort that allowed members to reach out with other mainstream denominations and to assist the people abroad. The church's outreach did not stop there; instead, it started to focus on the local religious community through attempting to build cooperative relationships with other denominations. The community of worship on campus was based solely on the mainstream denominations, which was explained specifically in The Clemson Agricultural College Catalogue of 1940, "Five denominations: Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics have erected churches in the community. Arrangements are made for services for students of other denominations."³⁶

³⁶ The Clemson Agricultural College Catalogue (Clemson, SC: Clemson Agricultural College March, 1940, Vol. XV, No. 1), 40.

During the summer months, the town of Clemson was largely empty. Starting in 1949, to combat the empty pews that the cadets left when they went home for the summer, Clemson College Baptist Church asked other churches in the community to attend joint services. These events were out of the ordinary because they would be held at the different local churches, with visiting ministers of the other denominations providing the message. Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians would come together with Baptists to worship in one ecumenical gathering. This type of service was unusual because of its regularity, occurring every Sunday during the summer. The cooperation of pastors preaching in the different churches revealed another difference. In other areas there was no need to have the ecumenical services because there was not an exodus of people as was the case in Clemson. These services allowed congregations to be influenced and educated by all denominations and not just Baptist.

One of the major points of ecumenism at First Baptist Clemson was the effort to educate the laity on other religions. In 1950 the congregation began to plan a "Deeper Religious Thinking Week." Later that year it came to fruition and provided an excellent forum to educate members and the community in general. The pinnacle of ecumenist practice came during the Religious Emphasis Week [REW], specifically on January 22, 1952. Several faculty members spoke and held

forums to inform the public and the church of the different religions that were prevalent in the area.³⁷ These forums discussed topics on Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Out of this came the observation of “Worldwide Communion Sunday” on October 5, 1952. Somewhat earlier, on September 28, 1952, First Baptist Clemson also held a union service with First Methodist Church.³⁸ This demonstrated that First Baptist Clemson was not bound to denominational lines but rather it was open to other denominations at a much earlier time than most Baptist churches in the Upstate.

First Baptist Clemson attempted to broaden the scope of understanding among its laity through inviting speakers of different nationalities and denominations. The highlight was a Russian minister who had been driven out of his homeland by the communist regime. During the winter of 1947, Basil Malof came to speak to the congregation. A member of the Russian Orthodox Church, Malof became a powerful testimony of the ecumenical nature of the congregation.³⁹ Even during the split between the Soviet Union and the West, parishioners welcomed Malof. Clemson College Baptist Church, as well as most

³⁷ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, Jan. 22, 1952), 1.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “First Baptist Clemson Letter,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1947), 1.

SBC churches, had a passion for missionary work. Malof was an important guest speaker because he sparked an interest among many in the congregation to become more aware of missionary work. He made the body aware of the troubles in Russia.

One leading examples of how ecumenical and community oriented the church occurred when the body opened its doors to local Roman Catholics as they built a house of worship during the late 1940's. Wrote Pastor Roger Lovette in 1982: "Over the years the Church has touched the lives of countless students and families in the Clemson area. We have aided a Vietnamese family, opened our doors to the Methodists when their church burned in 1964 and provided space for the Catholics while they awaited completion of their new church building."⁴⁰ Catholics and Methodists both used Clemson College Baptist Church as their primary house of worship during the construction of their buildings. This would not have been done in many areas of the South because of the rigid denominational lines that tradition had drawn. In many areas of the South, there existed little communication between denominations. In turn this demonstration of love and cooperation by First Baptist Clemson bore testimony to the ecumenical nature of the Clemson community.

⁴⁰ Roger Lovett, 75th Anniversary Bulletin (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, June, 1982), 1.

Even from the formative days of the church, denominational lines were strong and clear throughout the country, and yet, in Clemson they seemed to coexist and engage each other in a healthy manner. Clemson graduate, Sean Howard McMahon addresses this issue in “College Town and Country Church: A History of Fort Hill Presbyterian Church: 1885-1990.” “In May 1943 Crouch brought a Presbyterian minister from Charlotte, North Carolina to be key note speaker for the first Religious Emphasis Week. Baptists, Methodists and Episcopalians each brought a speaker into town and these ministers had discussion groups in the barracks.”⁴¹ All of the local churches from an early time period were focused on reaching the student population. One interesting omission from the ecumenical efforts during the REW involved Catholics. St. Andrews Catholic Church could not participate because Catholic Church law forbade it from participation. The REW was an unusual culmination of regional ecumenism. In many areas, churches did not want to educate their congregation on other denominations’ belief systems because of intense anti-Catholicism and anti-ecumenicalism.

Denominational lines have rarely bound the Clemson church and, as the past has revealed, it has demonstrated a love for all Christians regardless of

⁴¹ Sean Howard McMahon, “College Town and Country Church: A History of Fort Hill Presbyterian Church: 1885-1990” Master’s Thesis, Clemson University Press, 1991, 78.

denomination or race. Much of this could be attributed to the environment of the college involvement in the church. With so many different mainstream denominations in Clemson, the church needed to reach across denominational lines to help build a community of worship. This was evident during the 1940's and 1950's when the local churches during the summer months and December would gather to have joint worship services, the majority of the time holding these events at First Baptist Clemson or Clemson College Baptist Church at the time.

Ecumenical worship services were an important part of the history of First Baptist according to some individuals. As a long-time member of First Baptist Clemson, Hazel Collings Poe, remembered some of the community services during the summer. "For many years Clemson was pretty bare of people in the summers with the students gone home and professors and families on vacations. So the churches here at that time got together and had union services." And she added, "This gave the pastors some time for a holiday, and everyone became acquainted with other local churches. This also meant I sang in, and became familiar with, the church choirs of the Presbyterian, the Episcopal, and the

Methodist, as well as the Baptists.”⁴² This created a sense of unity between the different denominations.

All the congregations of faith would gather together with pastors and priests from the different congregations sharing the duties of speaking. The result of these ecumenical services had a deep impact on not only the church as a whole, but also individuals. They were able to look at the different methods of worship in a positive light. Deacon and longtime member Richard Mattox explained his reaction to the community services: “In any event, since I tended to like a more formal service, I was glad to learn that some Baptists knew how to be ‘reverent’ .”⁴³ This comical statement spoke volumes to the value of these ecumenical experiences because of the education that all worshipers were exposed to at each service. The pastors of First Baptist Clemson did not stop at encouraging a unity of worship locally; instead, they continued the trend through teaching people about the validity of other denominations. “More than any other minister, Charles Arrington,” noted church member Harry Durham,

⁴² “Hazel Collings Poe Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 2.

⁴³ “ W. Richard Mattox Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, November, 29, 2004), 1.

“helped me see that other denominations, even Catholics, had much to offer us in our Christian journeys.”⁴⁴

This practice of ecumenism permitted the church to be more liturgical than most Baptist churches in the area.⁴⁵ This meant that Clemson Baptist Church practiced a much more traditional form of worship service than a typical Baptist congregation. Starting in the 1960's the church began to institute various mainstream liturgical practices of acolytes, liturgical hymns, and seasonal regalia. This was explained explicitly in the Reconciliation team minutes of 1997 that expressed the aim to “Conserve the unique traditions of our church, while at the same time being flexible enough to appeal to and reach those of different cultures and values.”⁴⁶ This ability to have a more ecumenical service with more than a strictly Baptist flavor has attracted people of various cultures. That is why the church currently has such a diverse congregation of students from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. It has become a truly global church.

⁴⁴ “Harry Durham Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, Nov. 18, 2004), 1.

⁴⁵ Liturgical- This is the practice of a prescribed form of worship. The Episcopalian church practices this and the entire denomination will preach the same homily on the same Sunday. First Baptist Clemson practices a loose form of liturgical worship.

⁴⁶ First Baptist Clemson Reconciliation Team minutes (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1997), 1.

Baptist Doctrine

Since the founding of Clemson College Baptist Church, the foundation of the institution has been to search and follow the teachings of the Bible and the Baptist faith. The church was founded under the supervision of the Southern Baptist Convention with the sole purpose of providing a Baptist church for the young cadets and Baptist professors and their families. There have been several fundamental doctrines that have developed a rich history that set it apart from many churches in the Upstate.

The doctrines of baptism and salvation have played a pivotal role throughout the one hundred years of First Baptist Clemson's existence. Founded in 1846 in Augusta, Georgia, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) helped form these foundational doctrines that the church followed. The doctrine of baptism is a radical concept based upon the biblical principles found in the New Testament. The idea of total immersion as an act of submission to God had become a distinct part of First Baptist Clemson and Baptists everywhere. In 1909, the initial baptisms of the church took place in a nearby body of water.⁴⁷ The act was not done to express an idea of salvation; instead, baptism was a symbol of the love of Christ and believers expressing their devotion to God through a public

⁴⁷ "Saluda Associational Minutes-1910-1919," (Greenville, South Carolina: Baptist History Collection, Furman University, 1919), 13.

proclamation of faith. This also demonstrated that from the beginning the Clemson church was an institution that focused on practicing the doctrine of baptism.

The doctrine of salvation is a vital concept. In First Baptist Clemson's constitution individuals are informed that they, "must provide a profession of faith in Christ and baptism in some form."⁴⁸ It is further noted in the mission statement that "As one part of the Body of Christ, the Church, we are an extension of the ministry of Jesus. Like His, our calling is to preach, teach and heal."⁴⁹ Thus the church promotes that "In the Bible, God is the sole source of life."⁵⁰ The denomination always has had a passion to educate and instruct the world on what the Bible states about the purpose of God and the salvation that is offered. In much the same way as the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of Baptism has been a focal point for the membership.

The modern church has since adapted its policy on the theology of baptism. During the early 1970's this change began to occur when the church started to accept transfers of memberships from other denominations and not to

⁴⁸ "Letter to Saluda Associational Office from Dr. Roger Lovette," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, October 21, 1976), 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper and Rowe Publishers, 1958), 71.

require that these new members be totally submerged in the act of baptism. First Baptist Clemson had required all members to be fully submerged to have full membership as that was the policy held by the SBC. The change allowed those individuals seeking membership to join by acknowledging that they had made a profession of faith at some point in their life. This allowed members from Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and other mainstream denominations to join without having to go through the act of baptism. This brought much consternation upon the church from the Saluda Association. In 1975 the congregation added an amendment to its constitution that stated, "Church members are those who, having professed faith in Christ and desiring to associate with a body of believers, have been baptized and received into a church family by a majority vote, present and voting, and pledge of ministry of its members." The idea of accepting members through vote has been a constant since its inception. "As a family of Christian believers, this Church may receive as new members all those professing faith in Christ and requesting baptism by immersion. This Church will also receive members by transfer of letter from another church or by statement of previous membership in another church, providing membership in that church required profession of faith in Christ and baptism in some form. Members may be received at any scheduled worship

service.”⁵¹ This was a radical step to take because it directly disregarded the principles of the SBC and Saluda Association. As a result on October 21, 1976, the Saluda Association expelled First Baptist Clemson from the association. Subsequently, the congregation did not want to leave the organization and it expressed this feeling in this letter: “Historically, emotionally, and financially this Church is wedded to Baptist work on the Associational level and around the world. We earnestly desire to maintain fellowship with the Saluda Baptist Association and all other Baptist agencies.”⁵²

First Baptist Clemson became one of the earliest Baptist churches in South Carolina to be disassociated by an association over baptismal policies. This did not mean that the body abandoned the Southern Baptist Convention. The church remains part of the SBC even after being ousted by the Saluda Association.

Baptist belief has always felt that salvation could only come through accepting a personal relationship with Christ Jesus. The denomination takes this from several verses that are contained in the Bible, including John 14:6 and John

⁵¹ “Letter to Saluda Associational Office by Dr. Roger Lovette,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, October 12, 1975), 1.

⁵² Ibid.

3:16. In the Abstract of Principles⁵³, which was written by the SBC, founders of the denomination continued the practice of the protestant belief in justification by faith alone, a basic principle.

As with the baptismal policy, First Baptist Clemson needed to defend its autonomy once again. The church would have another confrontation, this time with the SBC. In the early 1970's the congregation came under scrutiny when it began the practice of ordaining women deacons. Eventually, First Baptist Clemson felt the need to limit its involvement in the SBC, believing that differences were too great to overcome. So, in the late 1980's the church reduced support for the convention to the minimum level of \$500 a year. In 1991 it became dually aligned with the SBC as First Baptist Clemson helped form what is called today the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.⁵⁴ This is a group of moderate, progressive, mainstream Baptist churches that felt the SBC had lost its original focus and had become dominated by fundamentalist leaders that would not agree with the moderate movement. Rob James, member of the CBF, wrote an in

⁵³ The Abstract of Principles is a document that was written in 1859 by the faculty at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. They give the basic standards of the faith that Southern Baptist are to believe and follow according to the principles set forth by the Bible.

⁵⁴ Dual Alignment- First Baptist Clemson is dually aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. This means that they are currently members in both organizations. First Baptist Church sends the majority of its money and its students to CBF funded programs and the minimum amount to retain membership in the SBC.

depth analysis of the transition between the moderate Southern Baptists and the Conservatives in The Fundamentalist Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention: A Brief History, where he argued, “That this campaign has changed the character of our convention, from one of openness to one of restricted thought, from one of spiritual liberty to one of fear to differ from the leadership.”⁵⁵ This caused a change in identity for First Baptist Clemson, no longer being under the guise of the SBC.

The loss of affiliation with the SBC and BSU raised a new question of how to reach the Clemson students. The church was no longer technically affiliated with the BSU since the organization is part of the SBC. Until the early 1960's the BSU group at Clemson College was housed at Clemson College Baptist Church. Once BSU moved to its new building on the campus of the college, Clemson Baptist Church continued to support the group substantially. To this day, First Baptist still gives the most of any church in the region to the local BSU, even though it is no longer an active participant in the SBC. The church offers an alternative worship service that seeks to reach Clemson students.

⁵⁵ Rob James, The Fundamentalist Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention: A Brief History (Timosora, Romania: Integrity Publishing, 1999), 5.

Modern-day Church

Modern-day First Baptist Clemson has undergone several significant changes that have affected its theological stances on baptism and salvation. The church has branched out from the supervision of the SBC and instead dually aligned itself with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). This arrangement has given First Baptist Clemson the ability to be more ecumenical, thus following its heritage of ecumenism through not being bound by strict convention guidelines and practicing more freedom of the local church.

The church today has seen its relationship with the BSU, which it founded and housed for over twenty years, become strained because of its departure from the SBC. Through the entire upheaval one thing remained certain: the purpose of the church from the beginning was never questioned. This was explained by Dr. Roger Lovette, in 1982 on the church's seventy-fifth anniversary, through the founding purpose of the church and how it echoed still. "We do not build a church for ourselves', they said, 'but for the Baptist students of Clemson College.'"⁵⁶

The church continues to be one that seeks to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, to spread his message, and to serve him in all ways possible. As former pastor

⁵⁶ Roger Lovette, 75th Anniversary Ceremony (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, 1982), 1.

Dr. Roger Lovette explained: “For this special place where children learn about God and students struggle with live issues and faculty members stoke the fires of their faith and teenagers hammer out their identity, we give you thanks, O Lord. Where families and business people find help and all come. . . one and all . . . to whisper under the shadow of a hundred crosses: Come by here Lord. . . come by here.”⁵⁷ The mission has not changed; if anything, it has become better defined. The church is out to seek the lost and to share the message of Christ.

In regards to the church making its impact, the view from some is more pessimistic but still the impact is being felt. “In faries [sic], its decline [the church] cannot all be assessed to Church’s interest;” explained Richard Mattox, longtime member of Clemson Baptist Church, “regrettably, students now come to Clemson with a much more secular outlook. Many simply aren’t responsive to ‘church’ regardless of the effort expended. Although the influence is small from a numbers standpoint, our work in missions (including youth mission trips and such), with Habitat for Humanity⁵⁸, Clemson Community Care, and perhaps

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ The church is active in service projects throughout the community. Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization that First Baptist Clemson works with to help build homes for the underprivileged. Clemson Community Care helps provide services for the underprivileged in the Clemson area and First Baptist Clemson works closely with them as well.

others no doubt has a positive influence for Christ.”⁵⁹ But the congregation does not wish to abandon the church’s mission; instead, members seek to focus even more closely on the Gospel of Christ. Mattox continues, “I want to see us again become the evangelical church we should be in reaching out to a world in need of Jesus.”⁶⁰ For over a century the main purpose for First Baptist Church has been to reach people and the community as a whole and that spirit continues.

⁵⁹ “Mattox Questionnaire,” 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

“When some future history is written it will doubtless be recorded that in these times of racial tension the Christian churches did comparatively little to promote understanding and good will.”

**Charles Arrington,
April 30th, 1964 Race Relations Conference**

CHAPTER IV

AGAINST THE TIDE

The story of First Baptist Clemson is filled with diversity and ecumenism. For years the church was the only Baptist institution within walking distance of the Clemson campus, but it built strong relationships with the other denominations. The church's focus was never to do what tradition had established, or what the rest of the state, or Christianity was practicing, but what the congregation felt to be correct.

As mentioned previously, there has been an emphasis placed on describing the history of Clemson University and the Clemson community; conversely, few have looked at the impact that churches locally had in aiding the formation of the ecumenical and racially diverse religious community. During the early 1950's, the beginning of the civil rights era was in its infancy, but First Baptist Church Clemson joined the effort fighting against the discriminatory policies that dominated South Carolina during the 1950's through the 1970's toward minorities and women.

In addition, the church helped open the minds and educate many in the community and the state toward a more enlightened policy toward minorities

and women. Beginning in the early 1950's the congregation established policies that were contrary to the status quo in regards to race relations. Furthermore during the 1970's women received significantly more authority in the church. Finally, these policies helped to reach out beyond Clemson to battle the struggles that were occurring on racial and women's rights battlegrounds in the state.

In early 1952 Clemson College Baptist Church altered its name, becoming Clemson Baptist Church. Along with this change came a push by its members to promote racial equality and more diversity in its leadership in regards to women. For women this active leadership role did not come to fruition until the early 1970's with the election of its first female deacon.

Though it took time, the church eventually succeeded in raising an awareness about racial inequality. To understand the significance of the stance that First Baptist Clemson established during the 1950's and 1960's, one must understand the racial climate of the South during the years prior to the civil rights movement.

The South was known for its racism and discrimination from the inception of slavery through the 1960's. Like many southern states during the 1950's, segregation in South Carolina affected all aspects of social and economic life. This was not just in schools, businesses, or restaurants, but was just as prevalent among churches. One would think that the church would have been one place

where racism would not have entered. Yet the church became one of the most difficult places to integrate. Many congregations in South Carolina held a closed-door policy to blacks, blocking African Americans from entering worship services. This was not only in the Low country and Midlands, but was just as prevalent in the Upstate.

During the 1950's violence was still an issue in South Carolina and even later as hatred and tensions grew with the push for desegregation. Tensions increased to a fever pitch as young African Americans began to practice "sit ins" at stores and restaurants in the Greenville area, just thirty miles east of Clemson. In "Amend or Defend: The End of Jim Crow in Greenville and Charleston", Robert Hart explained that the first sit-ins usually ended peacefully, but violence between blacks and whites soon erupted in Greenville. "On July 21, 1960, black demonstrators staged two more sit-ins at department store lunch counters before becoming involved in a brawl with local whites."⁶¹

The demonstrations that took place caused Greenville and the Upstate to be on a heightened sense of alert to the racial tension in the area. Hart explains in "Amend or Defend," "When the manager of S.H. Kress closed his counter, the group of sixteen youths and three adults ceased their demonstration and

⁶¹ Robert Hart Jr. "Amend or Defend: The End of Jim Crow in Greenville and Charleston," Master's Thesis, Clemson University, 1997, 32.

dispersed. As they walked down Main Street, however, a white man jumped on the back of a black protester. The brawl that ensued involved more than thirty white and black teenagers and took place over an entire city block.”⁶² Hart notes that the violence in Greenville did not stop at one isolated incident but instead spread into shootings and rock throwing, which plagued the area for years.⁶³ The violence became so widespread during the early 1960’s that Greenville had to declare a 9 o’clock curfew for everyone under the age of twenty to attempt to stem the violence.⁶⁴

These incidents were not isolated to Greenville; they were widespread throughout South Carolina and the Southeast. In Race Relations in South Carolina, Robert Everett explains that the situation was so strained during the early twentieth century into the mid-twentieth century that there was no way in which the situation could be considered “a pretty story.” African Americans realized that they had a voice and that they no longer should think of themselves as subordinate to whites. Everett indicated that African Americans stopped believing that their “best friend” was the Southern white and began to focus on

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Greenville News, July 26 1960.

⁶⁴ Ibid, July 23 1960.

how to change their situation.⁶⁵ In the 1940's an African American perspective explained the plight of the black man during the period, saying "relations between the white and black races in the South have diminished, the separation in living, in the industries, therefore in association or contacts has widened and hardened."⁶⁶ In both instances the atmosphere surrounding the South, and especially South Carolina, was one of sharp division and hatred.

Clemson University, which changed its name from Clemson Agricultural College in the early 1950's, was designed to be a college town. The lack of industry made the school the only source of significant local employment. It was because of this fact that the intelligentsia often did not have the same beliefs as the majority of the state's citizens when it came to racial discrimination. The University did not permit African-American students to attend the institution, but that did not mean that was the sentiment of the entire faculty. A significant portion of the faculty belonged to First Baptist Church Clemson, and these individuals emerged as the driving force within the church to push for racial equality. Clemson had denied admission to several black students since the 1940's, but Harvey Gantt changed all of that when he filed suit against Clemson.

⁶⁵ Robert Everett, Race Relations in South Carolina:1900-1932 (Athens: University of Georgia, 1969), V.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 197.

Gantt challenged the college's policy of racial segregation through requesting information on Clemson's architecture program. This was not the first time an African American had questioned the segregation policy of Clemson; Spencer Bracey [1948], John L. Gainey, and John Lonny Dease [1956] were all prevented from attending the college.⁶⁷

During the 1950's and 1960's Clemson was following the same form of discrimination that all of South Carolina promoted. The University did change its mentality on January 28, 1963, when, "amid extensive security arrangements, Harvey Gantt entered Tillman Hall to become the first student to break racial barriers at Clemson."⁶⁸ The peaceful desegregation was one of the highlights for the school and the town during a time of turmoil for much of the state and region.

In direct contrast to the mentality of South Carolina during the 1950's First Baptist Clemson supported a much different policy toward the acceptance of minorities. The policy directly contradicted the ideals of the school during the 1950's as well. Unquestionably, First Baptist Clemson was a church that thought progressively.

⁶⁷ Helen Riley, Clemson University (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 103.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

In the South the civil rights movement was not popular because it challenged the status quo of racial discrimination. There were church bombings in Alabama and Mississippi and many congregations were too afraid to take a stand for racial equality. Although unusual to the area, Clemson College Baptist Church was one of the frontrunners for the civil rights movement in the religious community of Clemson and the Upstate. During the 1950's it offered opportunities for the church to open up its doors to members of the minority when it was not popular and even dangerous to do so.

The reason for First Baptist's progressive thinking stemmed largely from the leadership of its pastor, Reverend Charles Arrington, and the deacons. In Pastor Arrington's words, "Several years ago when many negroes were staging kneel ins the deacons of our church, along with similar boards from other churches- agreed upon a policy of quietly seating any who might present themselves at our church door. This was, of course, long before Harvey Gantt was enrolled at Clemson. Before he came, however, the deacons met, and decided that as far as we are concerned the same policy should remain."⁶⁹ According to Pastor Arrington, progressive leaders in the church and surrounding churches, including Fort Hill Presbyterian, were receptive to change

⁶⁹ "Charles Arrington Unpublished letter to First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, 1968), 25.

and were willing to open the doors to anyone. This thinking came at a time when it was difficult for churches in the South to practice these radical ideas. By more than a decade this policy predated Clemson University's policy to end desegregation in the mid-1960's.

As the atmosphere around the Upstate and the rest of South Carolina changed slowly, communities, churches and institutions continued to endorse racial discrimination and even racial violence. Even when the University began to express a more liberal policy and opened admissions to African Americans, the surrounding communities grew even more defensive toward the civil rights movement because their traditional way of life was being threatened. Moreover, they had never accepted the idea of racial equality.

Just after First Baptist Clemson had established its open-door policy toward minorities, surrounding communities became more racially divided on the issue of desegregation. As African Americans challenged Jim Crow laws, whites became more vigilant in their enforcement of them. Greenville hardened its segregation of the transit systems and restaurants. Towns near Clemson, for example Liberty and Walhalla, became restrictive with their restaurant policies and numerous state pastors blasted the civil rights movement. "The white Christian is not bigoted when he says that a free society was not meant to be pressed like pig iron into moulds," explained William Lancaster, pastor of First

Baptist Church Orangeburg in South Carolina, “and he is frankly tired of the constant abortive effort to reduce all people to one common denominator.”⁷⁰

Lancaster was explaining that the division between African-Americans and whites could not end through manipulative efforts like the civil rights movement. Many ministers in the state shared this opinion, and still others felt that African-Americans and whites did not belong together spiritually. It was due to those statements that the First Baptist Clemson felt that it needed to take action to differentiate itself from the state’s discriminatory policies. In 1952 the deacons met and reaffirmed their stance for the open-door policy instead of giving into the pressure from the anti-civil rights antagonists. The congregation voted to uphold its statement that was made in the early 1950’s and continued the policy of admitting anyone who entered the building.

In 1951 the push for equality by First Baptist Clemson began. In January the student minister, Alfred Spangenburg, asked that “a delegation of negro college students from Benedict College be invited to visit the church and sing in the Sunday school and at the regular church service.”⁷¹ In 1950, the Clemson community had few African Americans, Pickens County counted only 4,300

⁷⁰ William Lancaster, “Race Relations Conference Response,” (Orangeburg, S.C.: First Baptist Church Orangeburg, April 30th, 1964), 3.

⁷¹ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, January 1951), 1.

blacks out of a population of 40,000, and Spangenburg felt that the church needed to reach out to the black community and educate the church and the students on the African American culture. In April, he reported back to the deacons committee "that the experience with Benedict College was satisfactory."⁷² This was a significant event because this invitation by Spangenburg was unusual for the time. The next year the church invited the group from Benedict to return, but the trip had to be cancelled because of unknown circumstances.

First Baptist Clemson had opened up its doors to African Americans and because of this the church began to receive requests from some in the African American community. A request was made in April 1951 that said, "Mr. Allen read a letter from Mr. Cole concerning a Negro woman student from Benedict College desiring summer work, and asking if she might be given employment in the Negro Bible School at Clemson next summer."⁷³ By May the church had agreed to support the young woman and it paid her \$125.00 to work at the Negro Bible School at Clemson, which was also partially funded by First Baptist Clemson. The Negro Bible School was a community initiative supported by local

⁷² "Deacon's Minutes," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, April 10, 1951), 1.

⁷³ "Deacon's Minutes," (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, January 1952), 1.

churches, which included Clemson Baptist Church and Fort Hill Presbyterian Church and other charitable organizations, to provide proper schooling for grade school black youth. It was a major step for the church to make such a stand early in the civil rights movement.

The church did not stop at talking about the issues surrounding segregation that dominated the South during the 1950's and 1960's; instead, it put words into action. In 1964, the South Carolina Baptist Convention moved to hold a Race Relations Conference. In March a letter went to every Southern Baptist Church in the state. "In an effort to clear the atmosphere and chart their course," read the opening line, "South Carolina Baptists will gather in Columbia, April 30th, as individuals, for a day-long discussion conference on the race question."⁷⁴

At the conference, the moderator and vice chairman, Pastor Charles Arrington, became one of the driving forces behind the event. But he quickly realized as the meeting progressed that his progressive thinking was in the minority. Arrington stated, "Forty-four of fifty three Baptist ministers and

⁷⁴ Tom McMahan, "South Carolina Baptist Convention, Christian Life and Public Affairs Committee Letter", (Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Baptist Convention, March 1964), 1.

The government was making a stand with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In conjunction with this several pastors came together to push for a Southern Baptist Resolution to support the bill. In response, the South Carolina Baptist Convention wanted to have an open discussion on the "race issue"

laymen who aired their views at a Baptist conference on race here Thursday opposed integration of Baptist institutions."⁷⁵ The ministers had differing opinions on why integration should be opposed. These ranged from the comparison of civil rights activism to communism to the concept that integration was "mongrelization of the races."⁷⁶ Others went on to explain that they felt it was against the will of God to integrate the church.⁷⁷ Many of the segregationist pastors employed Scripture to back up their segregationist position. "As the apostle Paul phrased it, 'all things are lawful unto me but all things are not expedient'."⁷⁸ The ministers used this verse to proclaim that the civil rights movement was progressing too quickly in calling for equal rights. The focus was not on the first part of the verse; instead it was placed upon the "not expedient" idea that Paul provided in 1 Corinthians 6:12. Another popular and common verse employed for the support of segregation was Genesis 9:27. In that passage,

⁷⁵ Douglas Blackwell, "Conference on Race Relations," Baptist Courier (Greenville, SC: Baptist Press, May 7, 1964), 18.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The Conference speakers had to reserve the right to speak by sending in their request prior to the conference. The turnout was not very good for proponents of Civil Rights. The opposition was much more outspoken at the meeting.

⁷⁸ William Lancaster, "Race Relations Conference Response" (First Baptist Church, Orangeburg, S.C., April 30, 1964), 3.

segregationists claimed that Noah placed Canaan under slavery that God sanctioned.

In direct opposition to the majority opinion in the audience, Pastor Arrington took the podium. He realized what pain and destruction the Southern Baptist denomination and Christians in general caused through separating themselves from African Americans. "When some future history is written it will doubtless be recorded that in these times of racial tension the Christian churches did comparatively little to promote understanding and goodwill."⁷⁹ He continued to focus on the heart of the issue. "We White Baptists pride ourselves on being a great missionary people, and yet we have done almost nothing to help the Negro brethren in our midst."⁸⁰ Pastor Arrington was not shaken; he pressed forward to emphasize the purpose and need for racial equality. "There are two Baptist bodies in South Carolina of nearly equal membership. There must be closer cooperation. Each area of the state should begin freely and voluntarily to set up schools for Negro ministers. We need a man to co-ordinate projects such as this."⁸¹ Pastor Arrington and First Baptist Clemson had attempted to change

⁷⁹ "Charles Arrington Unpublished Message to Conference on Race Relations," (Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Baptist Convention, May, 1964), 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Douglas Blackwell, Baptist Courier: "Conference on Race Relations," Baptist Courier (Greenville, SC: Baptist Press, May 7, 1964), 18.

the mindset of South Carolina Baptists through the formation of the conference. Pastor Arrington and the remainder of the minority progressives sought to bring equality and they did not let this minor setback turn them away from their purpose. He ended his speech with a challenge for Christians to see how the refusal to cooperate with integration demonstrated a strong negativity on Christianity as a whole.”⁸²

In February 1969, Pastor Arrington launched a Sunday service called “Race Relations Sunday.” This special day focused on building a community that understood the differences between races, or lack thereof, and how the church might accept all peoples.⁸³ This event provided a forum for all races to come together and discuss different methods through which the religious community could ban together to stop discrimination. The “Race Relations Sunday” had been long in the making, dating to the early 1950’s. Even before 1969, the church reached out to different races through various activities.

First Baptist Clemson emerged as a visionary church in a climate that was clouded with racial hatred, violence, and discrimination. The church did not allow the status quo to dominate how it was to be governed; instead, it used the

⁸² “ Charles Arrington Unpublished Message to Conference on Race Relations,” (Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Baptist Convention, May, 1964), 2.

⁸³ “Deacon’s Minutes,” (Clemson, South Carolina: First Baptist Clemson, January 19, 1969), 1.

Bible for guidance. In the holy book members found that God created all people equal in Genesis, as man was created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus Christ continued this idea of equality as he said, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." First Baptist Clemson attempted to put those words into practice, declaring a policy of openness in the church and building relationships with African Americans in Clemson and other parts of the state. Its members felt that it was the duty of the body to reach out to the African Americans, but only from within the walls of the church. The congregation believed that the church did not belong in the political movement, however, and felt that it could make a difference by being an example of civil rights enlightenment. Although the church did not take an active role in politics or prevention of discrimination in the community, it allowed the house of worship to be available to all races and ethnicities much earlier than most Baptist churches in the South.

Women's Activism

Women's activism in the South was not as widespread as compared to the North. This was because of several factors, often due to the region's conservative attitude toward women. The Southern view of the role of women consisted of remaining at home and not working outside the domestic environment or being independent. Southerners viewed the North as radical in its views of women's

roles in family and leadership. The South had a reputation of not disturbing the status quo, and of expecting women to remain in their traditional roles as keepers of the house and family. In much the same manner as with the race issue, the women's rights movement, which had originated in the North with the suffragettes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, had to develop a stronger following. This took longer in the more conservative South. There were small pockets of women's activism in the region, but overall the slower development caused the South to lag behind the more progressive North.

Historically, women had been unable to serve in leadership roles in the church, but as time went on, they began to take more of an active role. In 1873 the Southern Baptist Convention sent Lottie Moon as a missionary to China. She became an example for women and their work in the church and beyond. Her voluminous letters and diary entries explained the importance of women in the mission field and became a rallying cry for many females to be more active in their churches. Even with Lottie Moon, women were not allowed to be leaders and did not have a resounding voice in the congregation because of the long-established tradition that had been established by Baptist doctrine.⁸⁴

The role of women in most major denominations really came to the forefront in the 1970's. The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America

⁸⁴ www.sbc.net.

(PCUSA) began to see a sharp rise in the role of women in the ministry during the 1970's and early 1980's. In 1977, only four percent of ministers in the PCUSA churches were female. In 2000 that figure had increased to nearly ten percent. Prior to the 1970's women in the ministry would not have registered above two percent. This was a substantial jump in the Presbyterian Church.⁸⁵ Methodists had a history of women in the ministry earlier than many of the major denominations. On May 4, 1956, the General Conference of the Methodist Church voted to allow women into the ministry with full rights. Many women took advantage of this open door and a half century later there are nearly 12,000 United Methodist clergywomen."⁸⁶ This mainstream denomination had a vocal group of females that wanted to be clergy and were determined to achieve their goal of becoming ministers. Baptists were the latest important group to allow women into the ministry, with First Baptist Clemson being a pioneer in South Carolina to enhance female participation.

It was not until the 1970's that the church radically changed and women were given a leadership voice. Many mainstream Baptist Churches began to ordain women into the ministry and the deaconate. The rising interest of women

⁸⁵ Jack Marcum, "Women in Ministry: A Statistical Review," (Louisville: Presbyterian Church United States of America, 2000), 1.

⁸⁶ Vicki Brown, "Women Clergy", <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1021> (October 17th, 2005), 1.

serving in full-time ministry positions and the acceptance of this practice by the majority of members in the mainstream denominations helped to bring forth change and opportunity for women to serve. This was a radical step for churches across the nation because historically women did not have a large amount of power in many of the Protestant denominations. The Southern Baptist churches that pursued the policy of ordaining women into the ministry and deaconate faced a backlash by the Convention. This caused a great strain on the relationship of these churches with the SBC and would later cause many of them to seek alternative membership, remaining although dually aligned with the Convention.

First Baptist Clemson, which never avoided activism, pushed forward with the women's movement. Once again, this was not an openly defiant protest against the status quo; rather, the church changed the policies within the congregation. During the 1960's and especially during the following decade First Baptist branched out and took up the call for women's rights. The role of women in the church set First Baptist Clemson's experience apart from many other area Baptist churches. Some continued to disallow women in leadership roles but most of the mainstream denominations soon relented and began the ordination of women.

To understand the radical nature of First Baptist Clemson, one must understand the history of women's leadership within the church. This began with Mrs. B.F. Robertson,⁸⁷ who was earlier mentioned as the founder of the Women's Missionary Union at then Clemson College Baptist Church. She not only held that capacity, but also served on several boards and went to associational meetings where she often played an instrumental role.⁸⁸ Along with several other women, Robertson became a powerful voice in the church in providing for the cadets while they attended Clemson Agricultural College. She and others continually reached out to these students through visitation, luncheons, and fellowship.

During the 1940's and 1950's, in the face of oppression, the women of Clemson Baptist Church still played important roles in internal leadership duties, though not in ordained positions. Several served on search committees and were vocal as to whom they felt should be the candidate. And during this time period they also contributed in leadership of students at the church through the BSU. Clemson Baptist Church allowed women to serve in positions that normally would not have been allowed in the 1940's. Hazel Collings, for one,

⁸⁷ The first name of Mrs. Robertson is unknown.

⁸⁸ "Saluda Associational Minutes, 1910-1919," (Greenville, South Carolina: Baptist History Collection, Furman University, 1919), 7.

served as chairman of the Student Committee, which placed her in charge of BSU.⁸⁹ Women at First Baptist Clemson were not confined to the Women's Missionary Union; instead, the church felt they could provide major service.

The role circles played was vital in providing a forum for women at First Baptist Clemson. This was especially true during the 1950's, when several circles were organized because of need to accommodate the influx of women into the church. "I was immediately invited to a circle meeting," recalled Barbara Copeland, a church member. "I had never been in a group that we were all the same age. They had recently formed a young women's group. I was immediately impressed with the many, many young women close to my age, and they were so enthusiastic about church and the Bible."⁹⁰

As the church expanded, women felt the need to learn and fellowship together. The Circle ministry was not just a fellowship, but also a time of serious worship as well. "They were really serious about their faith. That impressed me and still does," observed Copeland.⁹¹ The growth has not stopped and today, the Circle groups have grown. Copeland continued, "Whereas we had that one

⁸⁹ "Hazel Collings Poe Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

⁹⁰ "Barbara Copeland Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

⁹¹ Ibid.

group of young women, we now have about 4 groups of active young women.”⁹²

The foundation of women’s circles set in the early 1950’s has continued to prosper.

In the early 1970’s the real push for women’s rights began. First Baptist Clemson became one of the first churches in South Carolina to elect women to the Diaconate.⁹³ The election occurred in 1973 with Sarah Cooper, a long-time member, being ordained the first deaconess of First Baptist Clemson. Cooper was not a loud and outspoken member; rather, she led by example and did not want the controversy that followed. Yet she did feel a right to become a deacon.

The idea of deaconesses was hardly new to Christianity, but this move differentiated First Baptist Clemson from the majority of Southern Baptist Churches and the Convention’s policy toward the ordination of women. Luke Smith, a pastor in the early 1970’s, pointed out that women played an important role in the church at an early stage. He explained, “I especially appreciated the fact that the church considered men and women to be equal in their ability to

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Diaconate- This is the term used in the Bible to describe a servant of the church. (1 Timothy 3:8-13) The roles of the deacon consist of serving the church, the pastor, and the needy. The early church had deacons and they were the community servants in Rome to the church and to the elderly.

serve God and humankind.”⁹⁴ The move did not differentiate them from mainstream churches throughout the country.⁹⁵ Mark Chaves and James Cavendish explained in their article, “Recent Changes in Women’s Ordination Conflicts,” that “In the Southern Baptist Convention the rising level of opposition to women’s ordination appears to be a direct result of the increasing number of such ordinations by local churches in the 1970’s,”⁹⁶ First Baptist Clemson was not alone in its stance on deaconesses and later women in the ministry. There were other churches in the area, including Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson and First Baptist Church in Greenville, that would later follow suit and ordain women as deaconesses and later bring them into the ministry. The move was bold because it alienated these bodies from the majority of the SBC.

The controversy that came to fruition during the 1980’s over the battle with the SBC over the ordination of women and selection as deaconesses caused

⁹⁴ Luke Smith, Letter to First Baptist Clemson, (Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 2.

⁹⁵ Mainstream Churches- This a term that is used for churches in the mainstream denominations of America. Examples of mainstream churches would be found in the PCUSA, CBF, United Methodist, and other mainstream denominations.

⁹⁶ Mark Chaves and James Cavendish, “Recent Changes in Women’s Ordination Conflicts,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (Vol. 36, No.4, December 1997), 581. This study demonstrated the incredible animosity between the mainstream churches of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Conservative branch, which eventually gained power of the Convention. The heart of the issue was over the ordination of women as deaconesses and ministers.

a major upheaval. Yet the foresight of First Baptist Clemson helped to alleviate much of the debate within their church. Before Sarah Cooper became a deaconess, the body felt it necessary to change the policy for the diaconate. A letter from the deacon's of First Baptist Clemson explained, "During the 1970's, First Baptist Church of Clemson had the need to organize and define the way "church" was to be conducted."⁹⁷ The church went onto explain the purpose of the deacon within the organization that opened the door for women to be in a leadership position. The letter from the deacon's continued on to explain, ". . . To minister in concert with the Senior Minister and other Ministers to the spiritual and religious needs of the Church and its members. They also shall have the power to act for the Church in other matters not involving a change in policy or polity. In the case of a question about the interpretation or administration of Church policies, the Deacons may be consulted for an opinion."⁹⁸ The document closed with a comment that solidified the practice of the ordination of deaconesses. "The Diaconate is united in spirit and purpose with each deacon using his or her talents and gifts to answer their calling."⁹⁹ The role was no

⁹⁷ "Letter from Deacon's to First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, September 15, 1994), 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 2.

longer under debate at First Baptist Clemson. This opened the door for women to serve in a position of ordained leadership, no longer relegating them to only committee work. This also started a new phase in the leadership and personnel of First Baptist Clemson.

The staff of First Baptist Clemson became diverse and women began to play a major part in leading various ministries that the church had to offer.

Michael Massar, a former pastor, explained the role of the deacon/deaconess in the church in his questionnaire that he answered in the interview process during his call to First Baptist Clemson.

The deacons/deaconesses should be known as “sons and daughters of Barnabus” in that they should be about the role of encouragement in the church. This encouragement should be acted out through caregiving, servanthood, and spiritual direction. The deacons should be like the nervous system of the body. They should be most sensitive to the things that are going on in the body and transmit messages of comfort, care and support. They should be aware of the hurts and needs of the congregation; they should be willing and ready to be available for service whether in the personal dimension of visiting the sick or bereaved or in the administrative dimension of stepping up to do the jobs that no one else seems to do in the church; and they should be models of a committed relationship to Jesus Christ. This understanding will provide comfort, care and commitment for others who seek to follow Christ.¹⁰⁰

Race and gender have been issues in which the church has been decisively activist. The church never went outside of the walls and picketed or openly

¹⁰⁰ Michael Massar, “Questionnaire Answers,” (Waco, Texas: Wildewood Baptist Church, December 27, 1988), 4.

practiced activism; rather, members chose to combat these injustices internally.

The church felt it could make a difference by reforming the body and setting an example for the world. It was policies and actions from within that made a difference and helped the congregation to promote civil and women's rights. The church opened up doors to minorities and women when it was not popular to do so. Because of these responses, there is a legacy of progressivism that sets this congregation apart from many others in this state and even the nation.



THE REV. CHARLES ARRINGTON
Pastor

Figure 2. Pastor Charles Arrington

CHAPTER V

THE SHEPHERD OF THE FLOCK

The pastorate at First Baptist Clemson is one rich in history and longevity. Since the inception of the church, First Baptist Clemson has had seventeen pastors. There have been some who had short tenures while others, including Reverend Charles Arrington, served for more than a decade. From the beginning members recognized that the pastor was an essential part of having a successful, productive church that would be able to meet the needs of the congregation, students, and community.

The pastor of any church is a key post. An individual who does not fit well with members will not be as successful as a pastor who knows the pulse of the people and seeks to meet their needs. The pastor or shepherd of the church is explained numerous times throughout scripture. Paul said that the pastor will be held more accountable because he is preaching the word of God. The Bible itself states that the pastor is the shepherd of the flock who protects and guides the church. “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,

not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”¹⁰¹

First Baptist Clemson has attempted to follow God’s desire as expressed in 1 Peter when it has searched for a pastor. The constitution passed in 1974 described that the Senior Minister should possess these qualities to lead effectively. “The Senior Minister shall be the spiritual leader of the church and shall lead the church as it carries out its purpose, the church officers and committees as they accomplish their tasks, and the Deacons as they assist in the performance of the ministerial responsibilities . . . In summary, the Senior Minister applies his talents as best he can with God’s help to lead the church in accomplishing its work.”¹⁰² The work of the pastor is twofold: to lead and to teach.

At the founding of the church twenty-five members of the congregation immediately launched a search to find the best person to lead them. Members were excited when Thomas V. McCaul was asked to be pastor. Charles Arrington explained in A History of First Baptist Clemson: 1907-1957, “Dr. Carter Helms Jones, prominent Baptist minister and educator of Virginia, preached the commencement sermon at the college, and Dr. Earle discussed with him the

¹⁰¹ 1 Peter 5: 1-3, New King James Version.

¹⁰² “First Baptist Church Constitution,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, 1974), 1.

matter of a pastor. He recommended a young man, Thomas V. McCaul, who was at that time doing graduate work at the University of Virginia and was also pastor of a church at Orange, Va.”¹⁰³ As mentioned, the call of McCaul was not an easy process. During his move to Clemson in 1908 his church in Virginia burned and delayed his taking the new pulpit. The congregation waited because it felt this particular pastor should be called. It was not until September 1909 that McCaul and his family arrived. He moved into a parsonage, directly across from the church that was near completion. He received a generous salary of \$1,200 paid for by the college (\$500), the state board of the SBC (\$500), and the small congregation raised the final two hundred dollars.¹⁰⁴ The college provided the \$500 stipend for the purpose of promoting religion on campus and social morality. Therefore, McCaul not only served as pastor of Clemson College Baptist Church, but also spent time teaching religion classes to the cadets at CAC as part of his stipend.

It was under Pastor McCaul’s leadership that the church took shape but growing slowly. His tenure from September 1909 to October 1917 was long and

¹⁰³ Charles Arrington, A History of First Baptist Clemson: 1907-1957, (Clemson, SC, First Baptist Clemson: 1957), 7.

¹⁰⁴ T.V. McCaul, Rev. McCaul’s Memoirs (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

progressive, and it included some of the most productive years at First Baptist Clemson.

The crowning achievement of Pastor McCaul's time at Clemson College Baptist Church was the fundraising and building of the \$25,000, 500-seat sanctuary in 1913 that stood only a few blocks north of the campus and near Fort Hill Presbyterian Church. "My first obligation as pastor of the newly organized Baptist church was to raise funds with which to erect a church edifice," McCaul recalls.¹⁰⁵ It did not take McCaul long to find support to build the sanctuary. "As I recall, we secured about \$20,000 in cash within two years, and we persuaded the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to give us a contribution of \$5,000."¹⁰⁶ On November 23, 1913, the church edifice was dedicated debt free and Clemson College Baptist Church had a permanent and spacious house of worship. The practice of opening the church debt free was important to such a small congregation because this created financial freedom. This was needed due to the sizable number of Baptist cadets at the college. In fact, there were approximately 300 Baptist cadets at the college during the early years.¹⁰⁷ McCaul realized even with only twenty-five members in the church the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 3.

purpose to reach the students was the driving factor for its existence. It was commitment that led the large and accommodating sanctuary.

Pastor McCaul left a mark on Clemson College Baptist Church that remains. It was important to have a strong charismatic leader who led with vision. He not only built an edifice where members could worship but he also brought a sense of pride to the congregation because it now had a place to call home. No longer did students need to worship in Tillman Hall and share space with other religious groups.

Pastor McCaul surrounded himself with several lay leaders during his tenure at Clemson College Baptist Church. Founders and leaders included Dr. Alexander May Redfern, who was a deacon and long-time treasurer of the church and the building fund. Another veteran leader who served not only with Pastor McCaul but also with other pastors was Captain F.H. Clinkscales, Sunday School secretary for many years. Other important leaders and founders of the church included the deacons Dr. Samuel Broadus Earle, Dr. Alexander Redfern, Dr. Thomas Grayson Poats, and Dr. Patrick Hues Mell, the later being a Clemson College president. There were several women that were instrumental to Pastor McCaul's work. Mrs. Gillete Dargan was a member of the building committee that played an important role in the fundraising and assistance of Pastor McCaul's crusade to build a suitable building. Another long time member was

Mrs. D. W. Daniel who attended Clemson College Baptist church while her husband belonged to the local Methodist church.¹⁰⁸

The membership was small under Pastor McCaul. Yet he did not lack leadership and volunteerism to accomplish the lofty goals he set for the church.¹⁰⁹ Pastor McCaul did not leave Clemson because of discontent or discouragement; instead, he left because of a calling. On September 16, 1917, McCaul presented his resignation immediately after a union service with the Methodist church. He explained that his reason for leaving was to go and assist the army as a Y.M.C.A. worker.¹¹⁰ This surprised the congregation, but it was the gentle prodding of the cadets that he had shepherded who had left and gone off to war that called him to the front and away from the pulpit.

After leaving Clemson College Baptist Church Pastor McCaul continued on to pastor other churches, in Florida. But the little church in Clemson had trouble finding a replacement. The congregation called Pierce S. Ellis to fill the pastorate. There is no definitive time period for his tenure, but likely he served between 1918 and 1919. During his brief pastorate, church attendance remained

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁹ Volunteerism- This is the practice of serving in a ministry when you are paid nothing. Many times this includes coordinating and helping lead different ministries in the church.

¹¹⁰ Charles Arrington, A History of First Baptist Clemson: 1907-1957 (Clemson, SC, First Baptist Clemson: 1957), 17.

steady. Arrington explained in A History of First Baptist Clemson:1907-1957, “In addition to his pastoral duties he also taught public school in the community.”¹¹¹ This allowed Ellis to build a bridge into the town by combining his work in the church with public service.

The next pastor to arrive was John K. Goode. He served between May 1920 and September 1923. This short term, however, did not allow him to make any major changes or to undertake any large building projects. Yet during his tenure some significant growth occurred. This had a direct connection with the expansion of the college. During the early 1920’s the student population began to rise and therefore the number of Baptist students attending church increased as well.¹¹² This helped the church to prosper in various ways and the large sanctuary was an advantage because of expansion of attendance on Sundays.

Growth continued through the pastorates of George C. Gibson and Ernest C. Kolb. There is no exact time period for Pastor Gibson’s tenure, but his years are likely between 1923 and 1925. Pastor Kolb had his heart close to Clemson College Baptist Church from the beginning. Kolb graduated from the school and attended church while a student. Pastor McCaul remembered Kolb as having an immediate impact on him, as he wrote in his memoir. McCaul explained how a

¹¹¹ Ibid., 18.

¹¹² See Appendix C - Sunday School Attendance Chart.

cadet shared with him the impact that he had made on the young men. "He [Bosdick] then replied that three other of my BYPU boys had also decided to enter the ministry and missionary work; E.C. Kolb who became one our noble pastors."¹¹³

Following along the same line as Pastor Kolb, the next minister called was another former student, Wade H. Bryant, who served between 1927 and 1929. Bryant was a graduate of CAC, and began his pastorate immediately after finishing school. He brought to close a time of tumult for the church, namely, six pastors in the eleven years since McCaul's departure. The congregation needed a pastor who could bring stability and dynamic growth. The years following were rather uncertain years for the young church. From 1918 to 1929 there were six pastors of the church and growth in membership was slow. By 1929 there were 123 members and the congregation felt more stable and established.¹¹⁴ What was needed was a leader whom members and visitors could trust and who would also stay for the long term.

Clemson College Baptist Church looked back at the past and realized what a talented Pastor John K. Goode had been. In September 1929 Goode was

¹¹³ T.V. McCaul, "Rev. McCaul's Memoirs," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 5.

¹¹⁴ Charles Arrington, A History of First Baptist Clemson: 1907-1957, (Clemson, SC, First Baptist Clemson: 1957), 18.

called for a second time to pastor members and students. It was during his tenure that the church would find stability and support from the pulpit, allowing it to grow at a considerable pace during the 1930's and later. Also the first formation of the BSU occurred, beginning in the early 1930's. Goode's tenure lasted almost thirteen years and in that time he oversaw the church through some challenging times. The Great Depression struck a heavy blow to the college due to the lack of finances for students and their families. Many students were from farm backgrounds and were hit hard because of highly depressed commodity prices, especially for cotton. It was during this time that church attendance waned and the body struggled.

Following the Great Depression, World War II erupted and pulled America out its economic doldrums, but the conflict also drew away cadets into active military service. In 1940, there were more than 2,000 students at Clemson; then, during the latter part of the war, the campus was mostly empty. Even with these major problems weighing on the heart of the church, it pressed on, and in 1937 the congregation dedicated a new addition to the 1913 edifice. Needless to say, Goode's second tenure as pastor was one full of adversity (facing the depression most of all), and some growth, with a rise in membership necessitating an addition to the existing structure. His stabilizing voice and

longevity in his leadership helped the church survive the storm and emerge stronger.

The next pastor to follow Pastor Goode after his departure in August 1942 was J. Boyce Brooks, who headed the church from October 1942 through October 1944. His two-year stay focused on continuing the momentum that Pastor Goode had created. It was also at this time that America was heavily involved in World War II and cadets from Clemson were continually being activated and sent overseas. This period of transition was a major moment for the church because it was important to maintain a core membership. After Pastor Brooks's short pastorate, the first student minister at Clemson College Baptist Church was called to the pastorate, Harold Cole.

In January 1945, Reverend Cole became pastor. He was young and energetic. Cole, who was a graduate of the college, knew the area well, and had a strong connection to the church. He was instrumental in rallying the congregation around the purpose of the church, to reach as many as possible with the message of the Bible about Christ Jesus. One Sunday Cole reflected on the past four years of his tenure and explained that the church was blessed

because the progress God had bestowed. He continued on to explain that this success was because of God and the “interest and cooperation of the people.”¹¹⁵

It was also during Cole’s years that the student ministry began to explode. The war had ended and the students and faculty reappeared on the campus, and they also returned to the church. At that time church attendance expanded rapidly to over 400 in the weekly Sunday School. Clemson College Baptist Church was not the only church that grew blossomed this time. When the war ended and the troops came home, churches across the nation enjoyed a growth spurt. From the late 1940’s through the 1950’s church attendance grew at a substantial pace.

Beginning in 1946 James Spangenberg, another former student, was called as the second minister of students. Two years later, the church could boast of having more than 200 students that attended Sunday services. Clemson Baptist Church brought in twenty percent of the 1,358 Baptist students on the campus. This was done partly through BSU and through the congregation and their involvement with student activities.¹¹⁶ Noted Spangenberg, “The Student Training Union has increased in membership from 82 to 210.”¹¹⁷ Pastor Cole

¹¹⁵ “Anniversary_Bulletin,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, January 1949), 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 1.

wanted to make sure that the congregation understood the magnitude of what was happening. It was under his leadership that growth occurred at a record rate. Church membership grew from 323 in 1944 to 524 in 1948, averaging about 100 new people each year.¹¹⁸ The church was multiplying its membership and its student involvement during the years under Harold Cole's guidance, but Pastor Cole was not satisfied as he stated in his letter to the congregation in January 1949. "You will rejoice in the enlarged program for the future. May all of us pledge to our Christ and our Church unfailing devotion and wholehearted cooperation in the years to come."¹¹⁹ This quote was given on the day that the church dedicated another building addition. Pastor Cole not only led by his words but also by his actions. Explained Richard Mattox, "Pastor Cole came out in the yard, and we had a short visit. I don't remember the exact contents of the conversation, but I know my daddy's objective was to place me in the care of the Pastor and Clemson College Baptist Church if I did enroll in The Clemson Agricultural College."¹²⁰ A year later, Pastor Cole left the church, but he would

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2. This number does not take into account those who left the church due to graduation and other circumstances.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ "Historical Thoughts," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, November 29, 2004), 1.

return as interim pastor in 1988 to supply the pulpit after the departure of Dr. Roger Lovette.

Following Pastor Cole's departure the next person to assume the pulpit of Clemson College Baptist Church was Pastor M. C. Allen. In October 1950, Allen was officially called to the church. He was well-educated, aptly demonstrated by the institutions that he attended. Originally from Spartanburg, South Carolina, he graduated from Furman University in 1937, and from Yale Divinity School three years later. He served as pastor of Bristol Baptist Church in Bristol, Connecticut, for seven years and then in 1947 moved to Beaufort Baptist Church in Beaufort, South Carolina. Three years later he came to Clemson.

One of the biggest impacts that Pastor Allen left on the church came in 1951 when he spearheaded a name change: Clemson College Baptist Church to Clemson Baptist Church. This was not done for a doctrinal reason, but more out of necessity to keep up with the university, as Dr. George Aull explained this recommendation at a church business meeting. Dr. Aull recommended that the church call itself First Baptist because he was afraid another Baptist church might come in and take the name. The church approved the motion and the deacons sent the petition to Columbia.¹²¹

¹²¹ "George Bennett Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 4.

Pastor Allen's six years at First Baptist Clemson were instrumental and the church experienced tremendous growth. It was when the church established the open-door policy toward any minority that cared to enter.¹²² This was a revolutionary proclamation by a church in the racially divided South.

Reverend Cole also added a sense of formality to the church and its service according to some of the members. "I immediately sensed the service was more formal (although not as much so as today) than in any Baptist Church with which I was familiar," Richard Mattox explained. "I am not sure if I first saw babies dedicated during Pastor Cole's ministry or if that came about during my senior year under Marion C. Allen (a very formal pastor)."¹²³ In addition, Reverend Allen's wife, Eleanor, was a major asset to his ministry as she was trained in the violin and viola at Ohio's Oberlin College in Ohio, a school with one of America's leading musical programs. For many years her talents added to the worship by giving the service a sense of formality and grandeur as she played.

The twelfth pastor that was called to First Baptist Clemson was possibly its most influential. On June 17, 1956, Pastor Charles Arrington became pastor.

¹²² "Deacon's Minutes," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, 1952), 1.

¹²³ "Mattox Questionnaire," 1.

“Charles Arrington epitomizes this church,”¹²⁴ as a member explained. His tenure would last fourteen and a half years and transform First Baptist Church Clemson into a cutting-edge religious body on both social and spiritual fronts. Pastor Arrington wasted little time in following the same guidelines that his predecessors had founded before him for equality for African Americans and women. The deacons’ passing of the statement supporting equal treatment of minorities and open-door policy passed by the church helped Pastor Arrington push forward toward equality. This was only a small part of the impact that Pastor Arrington left upon the congregation.

From the start of Pastor Arrington’s tenure his sermons had a common theme that seemed to have left a permanent legacy in the memories of many long-time members. Kelly Durham recalled, “My family came to Clemson in 1961. We began attending Clemson Baptist Church then. Mr. Arrington was our pastor. He included a children’s sermon weekly and frequently reminisced about growing up in Kirksey.”¹²⁵ In a farewell letter to Arrington in 1971, Eugene Park recalled, “Unforgettable to them will be those messages brought through your stories of St. Francis of Assisi, Wington, life in Kirksey long ago, and especially

¹²⁴ “Jim Copeland Questionnaire,” 1.

¹²⁵ “Kelly Durham Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

through Doris, that omniscient bird who even in flight always seems to be able to keep her feet on the ground! They're very glad you left Doris here; hopefully she may see fit to speak to them at times or at least she will be here to serve on the welcoming committee when you and Ottie return to live at Clemson."¹²⁶

Pastor Arrington's stories had great impact on the church, but his first impression left an indelible mark. This impact was explained by Harry Durham: "To this day I can see Charles Arrington, settling himself behind the pulpit and saying, 'Death is a mystery to us'. And he said this, as he said most things, with that smile on his face." Durham continued on to explain, "I had never heard a preacher take that sort of honest and direct approach at a funeral. I came away wondering what else I could learn from Charles Arrington."¹²⁷

Pastor Arrington also made a sizable impact on individual lives. Durham was not the only one who felt as though Arrington talked directly to him. It seemed like in the remembrances from the congregation of First Baptist Clemson almost everyone who was active during any point of Pastor Arrington's tenure remembers his great messages and his striking first impression. Recalled Grace Lewis: "Some of Beth's [Redmond's] favorite memories are Sunday morning

¹²⁶ "Letter from First Baptist Clemson to Dr. and Mrs. Arrington," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, March 28, 1971), 2.

¹²⁷ "Harry Durham Questionnaire," 1.

children's stories by Dr. Arrington about a bird named Doris, a sermon about each of the stained glass windows in the new sanctuary."¹²⁸ Even children recalled his powerful messages delivered with such a simplistic tone. The greatest gift that Pastor Arrington could bestow to the congregation was his love for them and for Christ. "Pastor Arrington had a great influence because of his genuine love for all of us," explained Richard Mattox, "as well as his ability as a preacher and leader."¹²⁹

Many in the congregation loved the challenge that Pastor Arrington consistently made to them from the pulpit and in everyday life. Recalled Harry Durham, "I loved the warm and open way he related to everyone. More than any other minister, Charles Arrington helped me see that other denominations, even Catholics, had much to offer us in our Christian journey."¹³⁰ This pastor had a manner through which people gravitated to him. It was because of this that the church grew substantially. As Grace Lewis reflected, "When we arrived in Clemson, Charles Arrington was pastor of the Baptist Church. Our only thoughts

¹²⁸ "Grace Lewis Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

¹²⁹ "Mattox Questionnaire," 3.

¹³⁰ "Harry Durham Questionnaire," 3.

were to move our letters to this church.”¹³¹ Pastor Arrington was a great leader and spokesperson for the church and that is why people remembered him so well. “By far the minister who had the greatest influence was Charles Arrington,” concluded Richard Mattox. “I can still quote some of the points he made in sermons. I know he is responsible for Carolyn agreeing to leave the Methodist Church and join ours, and at least two—perhaps as many as four—of our children made professions under his shepherdship.”¹³² Arrington was not a typical pastor, but one who would not back down from challenging the people. As Ina Durham said, “Another one is of Mr. Arrington taking off his glasses, leaning over the pulpit to make the point he most wanted you to remember from the sermon.”¹³³

In addition to Pastor Arrington’s extensive abilities to lead his flock, he also had a desire to build like many Baptists before him. It was this vision that led the church in 1964 to construct a 1,000-seat auditorium. This was one of the crowning achievements for Arrington during his pastorate. The space was needed because of the growth, membership approached 1,000. And the sanctuary

¹³¹ “Lewis Questionnaire,” 1.

¹³² “Mattox Questionnaire,” 3.

¹³³ “Ina Durham Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

was built for the church to grow to two services. He realized that this was a pressing need and challenged people to stand up to the challenge. That they did and the building was dedicated in 1964.

Pastor Arrington was not just an orator, but was also a writer and historian. He realized the importance of First Baptist Clemson's past and sought to preserve it through producing a brief history of the first fifty years. This twenty-five page pamphlet holds considerable value because information on the earlier period has been lost. He realized that the church had made an impact on the Clemson community and sought to document its progress.

Pastor Arrington was aided in his leadership of First Baptist Clemson by his wife, Ottie Arrington. She was a talented woman who helped develop the music ministry of the church. During her stay Mrs. Arrington wrote several pageants for Easter and Christmas. Grace Lewis recalls, "Ottie Arrington, she produced pageants. She wrote a very fine 50th anniversary pageant. She wrote wonderful Christmas pageants as well. She would write the pageants and direct them and I would make the costumes."¹³⁴ Mrs. Arrington was also active in her church circle and community organizations. She assisted in food drives associated with the church and various other ministries with the WMU.

¹³⁴ "Lewis Questionnaire," 1.

Moreover, Mrs. Arrington felt a strong need to reach out and she did so through visiting the students with her circle group.

Pastor Arrington continually sought God's guidance on his decisions for the church and for his family. In January 1971, he explained that the Lord had called him and his family to Israel to serve as missionaries. The church would greatly miss such a talented leader. Reflected Grace Lewis, "A sad day for us was when Charles Arrington announced that he and Ottie were leaving Clemson to serve on the mission field. . . We missed them in many ways as they were dear to us."¹³⁵

The church had evolved and prospered during Arrington's tenure. Most significantly the current sanctuary was built and dedicated during his time in the pulpit. Pastor Arrington exclaimed what an epic achievement it was for the church to have such a wonderful modern worship structure. "This building has long been a dream of the people of this church. They have worked and prayed and sacrificed and given that it might become a reality."¹³⁶ On September 27, 1964, Pastor Arrington and the congregation worshipped in their new sanctuary. This was a defining moment for him and his pastorate at First Baptist Clemson.

¹³⁵ "Lewis Questionnaire," 2.

¹³⁶ "Building Dedication," (Clemson SC: First Baptist Clemson Sept. 27, 1964), 4.

Pastor Arrington touched the church in many different areas for so long, and in 1971 member of the congregation expressed their sentiment through a farewell letter to him. "In physical as well as spiritual ways the church has prospered under your leadership. Space has been added, the grounds have been improved, remodeling has been done, and finally we are worshiping in a handsome new sanctuary. . . Please accept this letter as an expression of appreciation, regard and best wishes from the entire congregation of the First Baptist Church of Clemson."¹³⁷

The vision of Pastor Arrington continued in the capable hands of the Pastor Luke Smith. In July 1971, he was called to the church and would remain for two and a half years. It was during this period that the church solidified its traditions and purpose. Luke Smith explained these feelings in a letter: "The depth of the feeling and the sense of responsibility that members felt towards the ministry of the church to the college students was a gratifying thing to me."¹³⁸ Pastor Smith realized that the church was built to support the Baptist students on campus and he intended to continue that tradition. "I remember that many people in various ways gave a lot of time and energy to making the students feel

¹³⁷ "Letter from First Baptist Clemson to Dr. and Mrs. Arrington," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, March 28, 1971), 2.

¹³⁸ "Luke Smith Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, July 10, 1991), 1.

welcomed in the church and their homes.”¹³⁹ During his tenure he continued what Arrington had started to develop, a sense of community in the church. Smith wanted the congregation to expand and the only way for growth was through the membership coming together and helping one another. “Members were as intentionally inclusive in reaching out to newcomers as they were to those who were long-time residents of the community. College towns tend to be transitory in nature so this was an attribute of the church that was of more than passing significance in its mission to people in that area.”¹⁴⁰

Pastor Smith continued to challenge the people much like Pastor Arrington and even went beyond that, asking members not to accept the status quo. Harry Durham explained, “Luke Smith, who followed Charles Arrington as pastor, taught me that God was never intimidated by any of my questions, that in fact, he welcomed my questions as an indication that I was seeking to know him better.”¹⁴¹

Pastor Smith was continually supported by the lay leadership. Pastor Arrington’s touch was felt because he had developed a mature and efficient lay leadership. As Smith explained, “First Baptist was remarkably blessed in the

¹³⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴¹ “Harry Durham Questionnaire,” 3.

strength of its lay leadership. There were many talented and capable people upon who we could call when help was needed.”¹⁴² The church developed equality in its lay leadership among men and women and that was essential for growth and prosperity. In December 1973 Pastor Smith resigned from the pulpit to take a pastorate at a larger church in North Carolina. The search process for a new pastor took time, but in March 1975 the church called Dr. Roger Lovette.

Dr. Lovette was another capable pastor of First Baptist Clemson. From the beginning of his tenure the church was being scrutinized over the issue of baptismal policy. John Hubbard explained the situation that Dr. Lovette entered, “He was unfortunate that the dispute with the local Baptist Association over our baptismal policy came to a head just as Roger arrived.”¹⁴³ This came quickly to the forefront into his ministry in October 1975. Dr. Lovette, who was new to the church, became a calming factor in the controversy that pitted First Baptist Clemson against the Saluda Baptist Association over the biblical nature of baptism and whom it involved.¹⁴⁴ Dr. Lovette was forced to become a leader and

¹⁴² “Luke Smith Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, July 10, 1991), 2.

¹⁴³ “John W. Hubbard Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 3.

¹⁴⁴ The greater issue at hand dealt with the autonomy of the local church over the power of the association. This came to a head at the associational meetings where the association decided that the standards of the association superseded local autonomy of the church.

spokesperson for the church because of the controversy. On October 22, 1975, he wrote the Association a letter and in it he said that the congregation would not change its policy. Still, the church did not desire to leave the association.

“Historically, emotionally, and financially this Church is wedded to Baptist work on the Associational level and around the world. We earnestly desire to maintain fellowship with the Saluda Baptist Association and all other Baptist agencies.”¹⁴⁵

This reply came after the Association had recommended that the church be examined. And if the practice was not changed, the congregation would be expelled from the association. The letter sent on October 21, 1975, stated:

“Furthermore, we recommend that the Saluda Baptist Association in its next Annual Session, Oct. 21, 1976 give prudent consideration to the First Baptist Church Clemson as to her relationship after that date provided that the church at the time, October 1976, continues her current practice of accepting some persons in to full membership without having been immersed with believers baptism.”¹⁴⁶

This tumultuous period marked the beginning of the Lovette tenure.

One cannot let the time of transition be the microcosm through which Dr. Lovette’s pastorate should be measured. Outside the turmoil and later into his pastorate Dr. Lovette proved to be a passionate and dedicated pastor who led

¹⁴⁵ “Letter from Saluda Baptist Association,” (Saluda Baptist Association: Oct. 21, 1975), 1.

¹⁴⁶ “Letter from Dr. Roger Lovette,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, Oct. 22, 1975), 1.

First Baptist Clemson with considerable vision. Significantly, he guided the church through a massive fundraising effort called the “Arise and Build” campaign. Dr. Lovette exhibited insight through his leadership not only through times of crisis but also in his ability to guide the congregation through building fundraisers and internal changes. He had a passion for people being involved in the church and having a relationship with Christ. Kelly Durham explained, “After I returned to Clemson, Dr. Lovette was very intentional about getting me involved in church.”¹⁴⁷ He challenged the people once they were inside the church to strive to be the best possible. This challenge was recognized by Harry Durham as he explained, “Roger Lovette preached some of the most intellectually challenging and soul stirring sermons I have ever experienced.”¹⁴⁸ This provoking, passionate personality that Dr. Lovette portrayed from the pulpit carried over into other aspects of his ministry. He challenged people to step out of their comfort zone and give to the church; he labeled this policy “Arise and Build.”

During the final years of Dr. Lovette’s tenure, controversy arose once more. This time First Baptist Clemson felt that it could no longer accept stringent

¹⁴⁷ “Kelly Durham Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

¹⁴⁸ “Harry Durham Questionnaire,” 3.

rule from the SBC. Therefore, the congregation decided in the 1980's to limit its support of the Convention because of irreconcilable differences. The church felt that the SBC had become too restrictive and that it no longer agreed with much of the leadership and decisions that were being made in the annual conventions. During the 1970's the church began the practice of placing women in leadership positions with the election of the first woman deacon. It was not until the 1980's, however, that the church felt it could no longer tolerate the convention's policy on the restrictions on women in ministry. Once again Dr. Lovette became a calming force in what could have been and remained a volatile situation. He had seen the congregation through some difficult times and he continued to press on preaching the gospel and leading the church.

Dr. Lovette had a lengthy tenure at First Baptist Clemson, but in August 1988 he left, believing that it was time for him to have another position in ministry. For thirteen years he had guided the church and had seen it through some tumultuous but also prosperous times. He always sought to push First Baptist Clemson forward and continued to press successfully for both its physical and spiritual growth, with his challenging sermons that he delivered every Sunday morning.

The next pastor to be called to First Baptist Clemson was Dr. Michael M. Massar. He and his family came from Wildewood Baptist Church in Spring,

Texas. Pastor Massar graduated from Baylor University, a major denominational institution, and immersed himself in academia. He also had been trained at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Fort Worth, Texas, and he earned a Master of Religious Education degree. Moreover, he studied at Oxford, England, and at the Ruschlikon Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. In 1988, Massar received the Doctor of Ministries degree from the Graduate Theological Foundation at Notre Dame.¹⁴⁹ First Baptist Clemson not only brought in a pastor, but a biblical scholar who was well-schooled in modern theology. This was important to First Baptist Clemson because it found itself in uncharted waters due to the beginning phase of tensions with the SBC. Therefore, when the opportunity arose under Dr. Massar, the church joined the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and after 1991 became a part of this community of Christians.¹⁵⁰

Dr. Massar was a newcomer to the region, but that did not prevent him from preaching firmly in the pulpit. He challenged the people each Sunday by

¹⁴⁹ "Mike Massar Induction Ceremony," (Clemson SC: First Baptist Clemson, April, 1989), 1.

¹⁵⁰ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship- This group was formed in 1991. The group consisted of churches primarily from the SBC. These felt that they could no longer continue membership in the SBC because of irreconcilable differences. These like minded churches formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

closing with the statement, “Now go and be the church.”¹⁵¹ It was also during Massar’s tenure that the church began to slip in attendance and unity, as the church began to fragment under Dr. Massar’s tenure. “Mike Massar’s tenure with us was not one of the more optimistic periods at First Baptist Clemson,”¹⁵² one congregant remembered.

Although Dr. Massar was a charismatic pastor, he was also a rigid leader, demanding much from his staff and his congregation. In many instances people felt that he was driving the church too hard as Barnes and Muriel Bishop explained. “One of the most disturbing times occurred in the church was during the tenure of Mike Massar. This, in a sense, also had to do with the role of absolute power of the senior minister (SBC).”¹⁵³ Massar’s stringent rule led some members to feel uncomfortable under his rule and as a result much of the staff left. He was especially stern with his staff. “There was dissension among the members of the ministerial staff, leading to resignations. Some members of the congregation tended to side with favorites on the staff, though others remained

¹⁵¹ “Harry Durham Questionnaire,” 3.

¹⁵² “_____, Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 5.

¹⁵³ “Barnes and Muriel Bishop Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 2.

neutral.”¹⁵⁴ Not only did staff resign, but many members contemplated departure and in some instances they left. “The losses of Tony McDade, the Deans, Ed Steigal and many members of our church were probably the most devastating event in their times with this church.”¹⁵⁵ Needless to say, this pastorate had a lasting effect on the church that would reach past Dr. Massar’s tenure. “All this had a dampening effect on the spirit of the church.”¹⁵⁶

To combat the division that was within the church during this time, members called on outside help to open the internal lines of communication. “To promote healing a consultant who specializes in reconciliation was hired to conduct a series of meetings to help us decide that we really do love one another.”¹⁵⁷ The church decided that a house divided could not stand and that is why Dr. Massar resigned. Quickly a new search committee formed to find a suitable replacement to recover from the turmoil that had occurred. In its aftermath, First Baptist Clemson survived the nasty split that had prompted some members to leave for other local churches.

¹⁵⁴ “ _____, Questionnaire,” 5.

¹⁵⁵ “Barnes and Muriel Bishop Questionnaire,” 2.

¹⁵⁶ “ _____, Questionnaire,” 5.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

To recover from the controversy, in November 1998 the church called Dr. Todd Wilson. He was raised in South Carolina and was familiar with the area and the people. Dr. Wilson has a highly esteemed academic record to go along with his fine ministerial record. Dr. Wilson graduated from the University of South Carolina and continued his academic studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where in 1968 he earned a Master of Divinity and three years later a Doctorate of Philosophy in New Testament studies. Dr. Wilson was called to First Baptist Clemson from Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. There he had left quite an impact on his Alabama church home. As one member of Weatherly Heights told the Huntsville Times, "Dear Clemson Baptists: You're getting a great Pastor."¹⁵⁸ Dr. Wilson's impact was immediate on the church, because he exercised had a calming effect that seemed to subdue and heal the wounds that had been opened by the earlier split. Harry Durham, a long-time member, explained, "Todd Wilson provided a wonderful calm, but strong, leadership to our church while it was still recovering from difficulties."¹⁵⁹ Not only did Dr. Wilson provide a stabilizing force for the church, he continually challenged the congregation in every aspect of Christian

¹⁵⁸ Yvonne White, "Dear Clemson Baptists", The Huntsville Times, (Huntsville, Alabama: November 7, 1998), F4.

¹⁵⁹ "Harry Durham Questionnaire," 3.

devotion. "He develops and delivers well-reasoned, inspired sermons week after week and is leading us as we plan to increase our physical church plant."¹⁶⁰ His Sunday sermons were welcomed, but one of the favorite aspects of Dr. Wilson became his messages on Wednesday nights. "Todd's preaching and Wednesday Bible studies have been high points for me in his ministry with us," explained in a questionnaire from Harry Durham.¹⁶¹ It is an overarching theme that Dr. Wilson has brought new life to the church and especially to the Wednesday night Bible study. "Todd's leadership in the Wednesday night programs after supper has been a highlight of the week for those who attend. We get to study New Testament scriptures as they apply to life today and are helped to understand the authors of the text."¹⁶²

Presently, Dr. Wilson is leading the church in an aggressive building project that is challenging not only the finances of the church to reach above and beyond what is normal, but the goal is to teach the spiritual aspect of the church to trust in God and he will provide. Stated one person, "This is an ambitious plan

¹⁶⁰ "_____, Questionnaire," 5.

¹⁶¹ "Harry Durham Questionnaire," 3.

¹⁶² "_____, Questionnaire," 5.

that will require both effective leadership and cooperation from the pastor and the entire congregation.”¹⁶³

The pastor has been an essential part of the ebb and flow of First Baptist Clemson. In the early years the pastor played a vital stabilizing part in the success of the congregation. Pastor McCaul’s whistle-stop fundraising tour to help build the first edifice was essential for the congregation to have its own place for worship and one large enough to accommodate the influx of students. As the body grew and became more stable, the pastor assumed the role of a spiritual leader or shepherd that helped the church grow numerically and spiritually. Through all of the turmoil and strife during the 1970’s and 1980’s the pastor served as a source of spiritual strength. Overall, the pastor of First Baptist Clemson has been one rich in history with some eloquent and profound preachers of the Bible and leaders who have led effectively and transformed the church in a positive way.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 5.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: TIME OF TRANSITION

First Baptist Church of Clemson is a Community of faith, bound together by the love of God and committed to the service of God. Providing our members a sense of belonging and a sense of direction. Offering numerous opportunities for growth in faith and service to others. As one part of the Body of Christ, the Church, we are an extension of the ministry of Jesus. Like His, our calling is to preach, teach and heal. Our ministry is directed to the whole person body, mind and spirit. Believing that God's call to salvation is simultaneously the call to mission, we affirm every follower of Christ to be a minister.¹⁶⁴

Over the past twenty years the modern church of First Baptist Clemson has gone through a time of transition. From 1980 to the present the congregation has experienced significant changes in its affiliation, leadership, and membership. Through it all the body has attempted to keep its traditional purpose. As already demonstrated the main focus of the church is to spread its message to the community, students, and fellowship. Since the early 1970's First Baptist Clemson has withstood several challenges but it has grown stronger and more prosperous.

¹⁶⁴ www.firstbaptistclemson.com (Clemson SC: First Baptist Clemson, 2006).

Modern Student Ministry

During the past thirty years the main change that has taken place at First Baptist Church of Clemson has been the evolution of the student ministry. Starting in the 1940's with the Baptist Student Ministry, the church has been focused on reaching the Clemson students. At the time Harold Cole was the first student pastor at Clemson College Baptist Church. Students met and held all their events at the church. This was a positive development because it brought in a large number of young men and allowed members to build relationships with them.

The Baptist Student Union was a staple at First Baptist Clemson until it was moved to the present building immediately north of the campus in the mid-1960's. The South Carolina Baptist Convention felt it necessary to have a Baptist contingent full time on the campus. The church continued its active involvement with BSU throughout the separation from the association and the SBC. The church has retained its focus upon its overall purpose that was stated in its original charter, observed Harry Durham: "The charter explained that Clemson College Baptist Church was formed to meet the spiritual needs of the cadets at Clemson Agricultural College and the community in general."¹⁶⁵ In much the

¹⁶⁵ "Harry Durham, Cecil Godley Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

same way, older leaders of the church still see the validity of that purpose that was proclaimed nearly a century ago. "I feel that we still do attempt to reach the students. The luncheons attract the students. We have had many students take leadership with in the church, with several going into the ministry," church member Barbara Copeland explains. "It has been quite a blessing, not a burden, to be challenged to meet the needs of the university students."¹⁶⁶ Overall, the church views the Clemson University population as a great prospect of possibility and seeks to continue to meet student needs and remain relevant to them in the modern and always changing world. College Pastor Tim Willis explains, "Every time you talk about the mission of the church, they talk about reaching the students and faculty of Clemson University."¹⁶⁷ The students are a focal point for the church today just as they were nearly a century ago.

In 2004 First Baptist Clemson took a major step forward with the hiring of Tim Willis as student minister. Willis had been the Baptist Campus minister for more than twenty years and maintained a strong working relationship with the University. This allowed First Baptist Clemson to regain a tie to the school, once the Baptist Student Union had stopped working closely with the church. In

¹⁶⁶ "Barbara Copeland Questionnaire," 1.

¹⁶⁷ "Tim Willis Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, 2004), 4.

response, the congregation launched a Thursday night ministry called Cooperative Student Fellowship (CSF). The ministry attempts to reach the needs of students through providing relevant and innovative worship services. CSF also holds a regular Thursday night dinner and an important message focused on challenging those in attendance. The organization is recognized by Clemson University as an official campus organization and that helps CSF to reach out to the campus. Also, the church provides opportunities for students to serve, giving chances for them to participate in the college ministry and beyond the walls of the church. One of the larger projects that CSF participates in is the mission trip to Honduras. Students work with Habitat International to build homes and other structures for residents of this depressed nation.¹⁶⁸ The congregation is also reinstituting the adopt-a-student program. One recent alumna recalls, "I loved the adopt-a-student program. The family that adopted me was like a home away from home. The program is a great way for students to be involved in their college church."¹⁶⁹ This is a great program that several other churches in the area provide. The adopt-a-student program has brought many college students into the church by providing them a family while they attend Clemson University.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶⁹ "Nori-Lyn Moffatt Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, 2005), 1.

During the early 1990's Amy Jacks Dean, student minister, attempted to restart the Student Adoption program. Dean described the different intricacies and goals of the program: "You don't have to wash their clothes, you don't have to feed them everyday, you don't have to pick up after them, and you don't have to pay their tuition. You do have to be persistent. Students have busy schedules, and it is difficult to get in touch with them. But you must be persistent!!!"¹⁷⁰

Apparently the same problems in continuing the program of student adoption took place in 1985 as well. A letter went out to members preparing them for the upcoming year in which they projected the involvement of over 125 students.

Susan Fagan, a volunteer worker with the college ministry, explained that there were ten principles each family needed to follow in order for students to interact and build long lasting relationships. "First is informality, do not to get discouraged, be creative, think of what it must mean to be a freshman, give them plenty of room, listen, listen, listen, pray for them, invite them to Wednesday Night suppers where the entire church can fellowship, you are an anchor, and don't be afraid to call for help."¹⁷¹ These ten principles remain and some of the

¹⁷⁰ Amy Jacks Dean, "Letter to First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, August 14, 1995), 1.

¹⁷¹ Susan Fagan, "Letter to First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, November 6 1985), 1-2.

most important aspects not only of the Student Adoption program, but most importantly of the collegiate ministry as a whole.

Tim Willis, who has assumed control of the collegiate ministry, explains the vision of the ministry in this manner, “CSF and First Baptist provide a place where students can expand their faith and become even more authentic children of God. Our focus is Faith, Hope and Love. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 13:13 that the greatest of these is Love.” He adds, “My friend William Sloane Coffin says that God dwells with those who make love their aim. We welcome all students and want you to know that our community of faith is about love and encouragement. I look forward to meeting you and am here to help in any way.”¹⁷² The greatest manner in which First Baptist Clemson can remain relevant to the world is through demonstrating Christ’s love to the campus. What sets apart CSF is that it is a church-based campus organization. Many of the religious organizations are not affiliated with a church; for example, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Baptist Student Union, and other para-church groups. That sets apart CSF because it can provide a strong church family to go along with the collegiate ministry.

¹⁷² <http://www.firstbaptistclemson.com/csf.htm> (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson).

The collegiate ministry continually focuses on reaching the students in various ways. CSF, for instance, helps students move in during the heat and humidity of August, or by simply asking them to attend church, much like this letter written in 1987: "I am writing to tell you about our church here in Clemson. First Baptist has worked hard to meet the needs of Clemson students for eighty years! We have a very strong Student ministry program in our church, and we try to provide a church home to all the students who worship with us."¹⁷³ Overall, the focus of the church remains to minister and be relevant to a collegiate audience.

Music

First Baptist Church has had a strong tradition of offering excellence in traditional worship. At the beginning of the church volunteers led the small congregation with a piano. This allowed different people to serve. With so few in the congregation it was difficult to have a choir, but as growth followed, so did the choir to help lead worship. When asked about what he remembered about the choir, Joe Rostrum replied, "We have had different directors, a lot of them were volunteers in the early days. Now we have the Minister of Music. I feel

¹⁷³ "Letter to Clemson University Students," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson, August 1, 1985), 1.

happy to have been in the choirs, Emma Webb is one of those that were great, she was a director for quite some time.”¹⁷⁴ This was also one of the early ways in which women could serve in a leadership role. The choir thrived not only with the adults, but the college students had a well remembered student choir, singing numerous times at the State Baptist Student Union Convention.¹⁷⁵ As the church evolved, so did its music. The choir became better trained, and during the 1960’s the church hired a minister of music to organize and create a well-equipped music ministry. According to Bob Blackmon, The music ministry has played a vital role in the church. “I think there is a lot of joy that is brought into the church, with the music, and particularly the specials. The message of the music, the hanging of the greens I couldn’t imagine that without the choir.”¹⁷⁶

The present music ministry has been left in good hands since the hiring of Robert Gammon. Joe Rostrum, choir member, explains, “The music went through quite an evolution and now it is under Robert Gammon who is doing a very good job.”¹⁷⁷ He is innovative and the growth of the choir speaks for the

¹⁷⁴ “Joe Rostron Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

¹⁷⁵ “Willis Questionnaire,” 1.

¹⁷⁶ “Bob Blackmon Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

¹⁷⁷ “Joe Rostron Questionnaire,” 1.

excitement that it produces every Sunday morning. Gammon has continued the legacy of quality worship. The church continues to have a strong collegiate choir, and an active and professional adult choir that assists the church in Sunday worship.

The Transition

The time of transition in the modern First Baptist Clemson took place over a resolution that the SBC passed in 1984. The question that was answered by the Convention dealt with women in the ministry and whether SBC churches should allow women in the pulpit as deacons and other leadership positions. This was the answer of the SBC: "Therefore, be it Resolved, That we not decide concerns of Christian doctrine and practice by modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiastical trends or by emotional factors; that we remind ourselves of the dearly bought Baptist principle of the final authority of scripture in matters of faith and conduct; and that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination."¹⁷⁸ To support the claim the Convention used texts from Acts 2:17 and Galatians 3:28, and the key verse to uphold its view was 1 Timothy 2:12. It

¹⁷⁸ "1984 Southern Baptist Annual Convention," (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC, 1984), 15.

was these verses, the SBC proclaimed, that gave support for the idea of not allowing women in the pulpit and in some instances in the ministry itself. This infuriated many SBC congregations. First Baptist Clemson reverted to the same argument that it had supported in its turmoil with the Saluda Baptist Association over the controversy of baptism in the mid-1970's, namely the autonomy of the local church. Members of First Baptist Clemson felt it was their right to have a differing interpretation of the Scriptures that would allow them to have ordained women in leadership positions as well as in the pulpit. They also felt that it was a local decision whether or not to allow women to be ordained and that it was not the position of the SBC to govern over them on this issue.

The church was already practicing the policy of allowing women to be called and ordained into leadership positions. The SBC would not back down from the earlier actions of the Saluda Baptist Association. Through much debate, the church decided that it could not fully support the SBC, and in the late 1980's the church decided to no longer vocally back the Convention. It stopped sending messengers and reduced its financial giving. This was a major turning point for the congregation. Members were now no longer under the authority of the SBC, and they were not hindered by a larger governing body that could dictate what they could and could not do.

First Baptist Clemson was not the only church that was in disagreement with the SBC. Other local churches decided to become dually aligned with the SBC and the CBF. First Baptist Greenville, Boulevard Baptist Church, and First Baptist Greenwood were some larger congregations that either left the convention or became dually aligned with the CBF. This was difficult on First Baptist Clemson, but it was not alone in its decision not to support the SBC.

First Baptist Clemson was now, in theory, without a convention or group of churches. In response to the problem the church decided to form an alliance through the Covenant Baptist Association. This association consisted of First Baptist Church Greenwood and First Baptist Church Clemson. First Baptist Greenwood was a church that was going through the same experience as First Baptist Clemson. The two churches established a timetable for the association to be formed properly. In fall 1989 the churches came together for several discussions about the best avenues through which to form an association. In March 1990 the staffs met to prepare a more concrete plan of action. Between June 1990 and April 1991 the deacons of each church visited with each congregation to develop a bond of togetherness. On June 30, 1991, at First Baptist Church Clemson, the formal announcement was made to recommend formation of an association between the two churches under the moderation of Bob Burks,

a representative and moderator for the CBF.¹⁷⁹ In October 1991 the name of Covenant Baptist Association was designated. The purpose of this association was not to return to the same format of the SBC; instead it sought “to promote fellowship, education and missions awareness and participation among the churches of the Association.... The focus shall be on the assistance the Association can give to the churches.”¹⁸⁰

This was an historic day because it permanently ended the dependence of the Clemson congregation on the SBC. It gave the church an association with other like bodies to aid in continuing its ministry. Due to the creation of the Covenant Baptist Association, First Baptist Clemson joined the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as well.¹⁸¹ The church could see that this day was coming prior to the talks with First Baptist Greenwood. Members wanted to make certain that once Dr. Lovette resigned, they brought in a moderate pastor who would continue along the path toward upholding their values. Dr. Michael Massar

¹⁷⁹ “Covenant Association Timeline,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

¹⁸⁰ “By-Laws of The Covenant Baptist Association of South Carolina”, (Columbia, SC: Covenant Baptist Association of South Carolina), 1.

¹⁸¹ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) was formed in response to the opposition against the Southern Baptist Convention and their policies against women and other issues. These churches were primarily of Mainstream theology, and the CBF allowed them common ground to come together as a group as each church left the SBC. The CBF was formed officially on May 11th, 1991, with more than 6,000 “moderates” in attendance. Delegates were sent from both First Baptist Clemson and First Baptist Greenwood.

explained his denominational ties in his questionnaire that was sent to members as they searched for the successor to Dr. Lovette. "I grew up in a Baptist family. I was educated at a Baptist university and seminary. I am heavily indebted to Baptists and specifically Southern Baptists. The controversy that has ravaged our denomination for the past decade or so has saddened me greatly, but it has not disillusioned me." He added, "I still believe the age-old Baptist principles of 'the priesthood of the believer' and 'the autonomy of the local church' are vital to our understanding of ministry and mission of the church."¹⁸² The church felt it was its duty to protect membership and allow individuals to practice these established principles of the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church. And First Baptist Clemson succeeded in maintaining its autonomy. In 2003 the church took a vote to decide whether to sever ties permanently with the SBC. The decision needed a two-thirds majority to pass and the tally was 120-95 in favor of retaining membership. Therefore, the church continues a dual alignment. This is not uncommon; there are several churches in the Upstate that maintain dual alignment with the SBC and the CBF.

The church had mixed opinions on this point in its history, but overall the congregation felt that it was stronger because of the turmoil. Walter Cox,

¹⁸² Michael Massar "Questionnaire Answers" (Waco, Texas: Wildewood Baptist Church, December 27, 1988), 2.

longtime member of First Baptist Clemson, elaborated, "It is wholesome, and we have weathered some difficult times. I felt that communication was poor, and as a result of improper communications and personal feelings of jealousy, but we came through and we are stronger for it, we have come and we are a stronger church today."¹⁸³ The turmoil caused by the split with the SBC caused members to depend upon one another because they were no longer associated with a larger body. The formation of the Covenant Baptist Association provided more stability to the church and gave it a voice once again in the body.

Diversity

The promotion of diversity is one in which many churches do not take part. Even though some congregations are of one strata or race, First Baptist Clemson has fought hard over the last twenty years to break out of the mold of being a wholly homogenous body. To solve this matter church leaders have educated their membership in several ways. One of the most important avenues is through allowing them to worship with other congregations. In the 1970's the church began community services. Dr. Roger Lovette spearheaded this united gathering concept to encourage a loving religious community in Clemson. Long-time member Frances Roston explained the gathering, "After Roger Lovette

¹⁸³ "Walter Cox Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson," (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

came, I mentioned to him about that (the community worship gatherings in the 1950's), and he thought about it, and when he went to the community pastors gathering, he told them about it, and they started having the 'Together November Program', the different churches came together on Sunday Night."¹⁸⁴ This community worship allowed the church to continue the legacy of ecumenism that Pastor Arrington had developed during his pastorate.

At First Baptist Clemson there are various ways in which the congregation is promoting diversity in its membership. One of the most effective methods is the First Baptist Church of Clemson Child Enrichment Center. The staff and the children are from every social strata and diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, this adds to the impact of the church not just to the membership but also provides a way for the church to reach the greater Clemson community. The Enrichment Center explains the purpose of the center: "This is a place of learning and teaching all in God's name."¹⁸⁵ The church has an open-door policy to anyone who enters, whether it is from their day-care or from off the streets.

¹⁸⁴ "Frances Rostron Questionnaire," 1.

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.firstbaptistclemson.com/Ministries/Directors%20Letter.htm> , (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson).

Observed Lou Blackmon, church member, “the church is proud of accepting people of different backgrounds.”¹⁸⁶

First Baptist Clemson also offers English as a Second Language classes. Classes are well attended by Asian students and others of different nationalities. Many of the volunteers who are involved say that they are blessed more by the students they are helping than the teachings that they provide. Lou Blackmon, who is also an active teacher in the ESL courses, stated, “One of the things that I thought I wanted to do was travel, but by working with the people from other countries, you feel like you are traveling. And besides you are doing some good and you can see results. Most of them are so nice and charming, and I have learned a lot from them. I have learned more from them than they have from me.”¹⁸⁷ This has allowed First Baptist Clemson to reach out to the local Asian community. Koreans have now established a church within First Baptist Clemson and worship freely in the building at different times during the week. This demonstrates the strong moves toward diversity that have occurred.

The final factor to having a truly diverse church is establishing within the congregation the idea that diversity is healthy. The concept is real to the people

¹⁸⁶ “Lou Blackmon Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.

of First Baptist Clemson. Noted Barnes and Muriel Bishop, “FBCC has allowed people with different backgrounds and with different previous church cultures to feel welcome and accepted. We may not always agree with each other but we agree to disagree in friendship and Christian love.”¹⁸⁸ That is the call of First Baptist Church of Clemson, namely to be open and diverse and allow all to experience Christian love.

Relevance

First Baptist Clemson has battled over the last twenty years to remain relevant in such a changing culture. Early on the membership recognized that to remain relevant to today’s world, people must be challenged. Observed Walter Cox: “I realized that this was the place that I needed to anchor to strengthen my Christian faith. The church has done so much to challenge me to know more about the Christian Faith.”¹⁸⁹ Members also realized that they must reach out to the community to meet their needs. That is why the church started the Children’s enrichment program, ESL program, and youth programs.

According to many in the congregation, just having the church in the community of Clemson allows the body to be relevant. Simply the idea of the

¹⁸⁸ “Barnes and Muriel Bishop Questionnaire,” 1.

¹⁸⁹ “Cox Questionnaire,” 1.

First Baptist's presence in the community is enough to deem it relevant for society. "Perhaps the Church's greatest strength is simply that of "being here." Even when we are not flourishing, we are a "light shining in the darkness" — standing ready to help those in need, both temporal and spiritual."¹⁹⁰

The Future of the Church

The past twenty years have been a time of transition, change, healing, and growth. The church has had only three pastors, demonstrating considerable stability. Now under the leadership of Pastor Todd Wilson, the church is growing numerically and expanding through building a state of the art education building. The prospects for the future look encouraging.

Many present-day members have positive views of what the future of the church holds. Richard Mattox states, "I want to see us again become the evangelical church we should be in reaching out to a world in need of Jesus."¹⁹¹ Ruby Elrod adds to the sentiment of Richard Mattox through envisioning the church as continuing its ministry for years to come. "Well, I feel like this church will continue to make an impact on others, and I want to continue to be a part of

¹⁹⁰ "Mattox Questionnaire," 3.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 1.

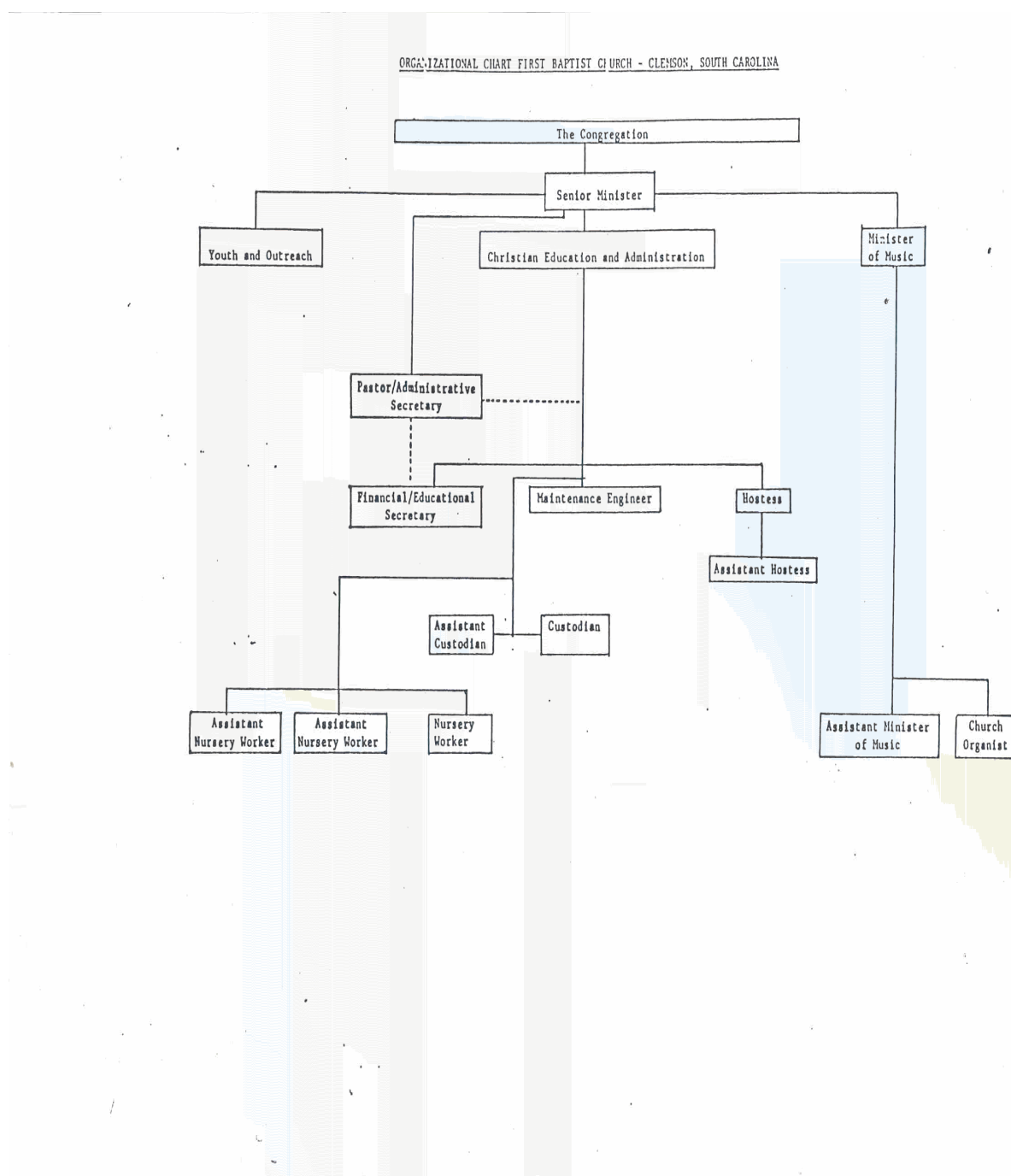
this church.”¹⁹² The mission of First Baptist Clemson for the last century has been to reach the students and community of Clemson, South Carolina, in an effective and relevant manner.

¹⁹² “Ruby Elrod Questionnaire for First Baptist Clemson,” (Clemson, SC: First Baptist Clemson), 1.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

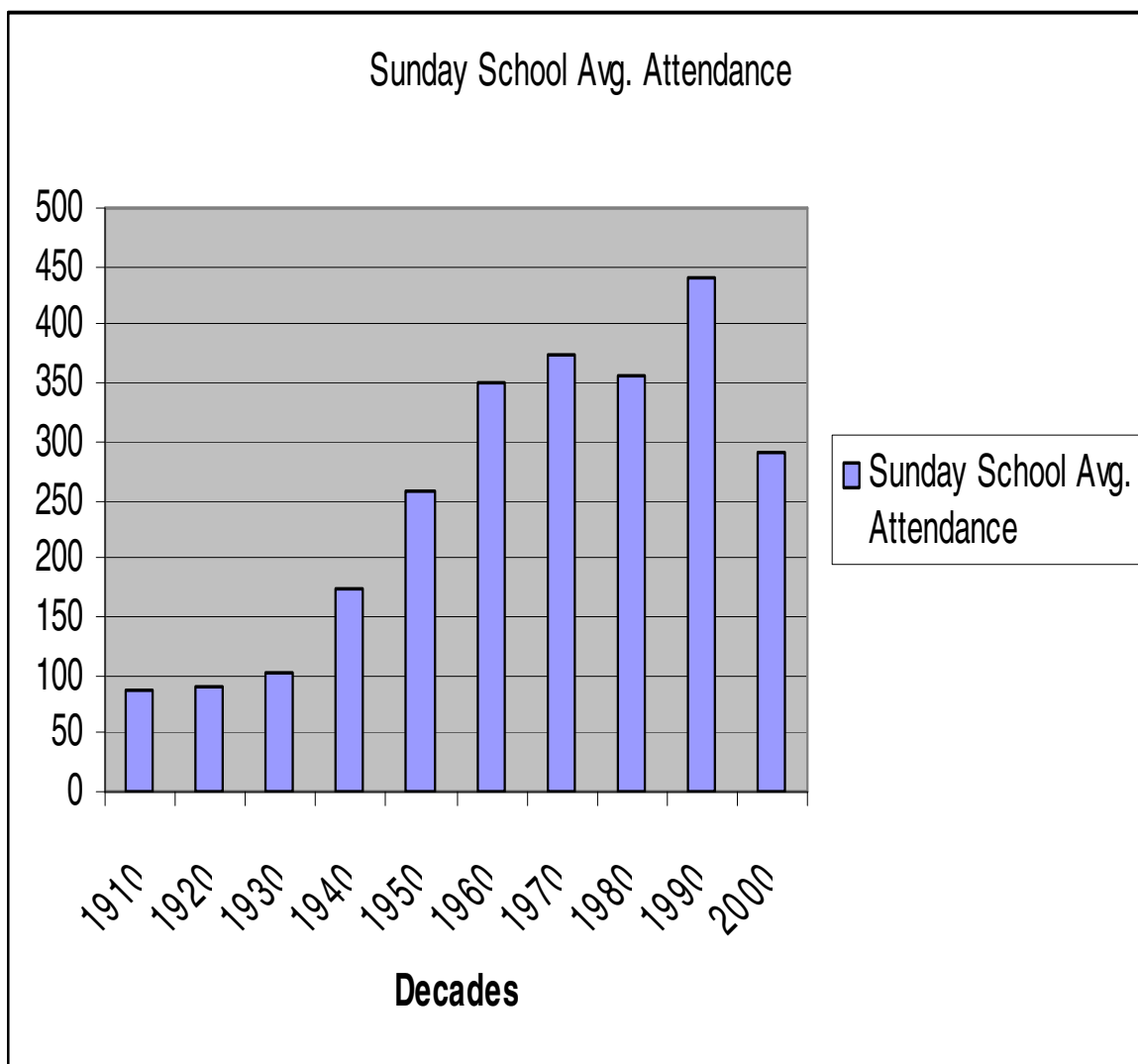
First Baptist Church Organization Chart



Appendix B

First Baptist Clemson Pastors

Pastor	Term
Thomas V. McCaul	1909-1917
Pierce S. Ellis	1918-1919
John K. Goode.....	1920-1923
George C. Gibson	1924-1925
Ernest C. Kolb	1925-1926
Wade H. Bryant.....	1927-1929
John K. Goode.....	1929-1942
J. Boyce Brooks	1942-1944
Harold Cole.....	1945-1949
M. C. Allen	1950-1956
Charles Arrington	1956-1971
Luke B. Smith.....	1971-1973
Roger Lovette.....	1975-1988
Mike Massar.....	1989-1996
Todd Wilson	1998-2006

Appendix CSunday School Attendance 1910-2000

Appendix D

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Name
BSU	Baptist Student Union
BYPU	Baptist Young Person's Union
CAC.....	Clemson Agricultural College
CBF	Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
CSF	Cooperative Student Fellowship
ESL	English as a Second Language
PCUSA.....	Presbyterian Church United States of America
REW	Religious Emphasis Week
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
WMU.....	Women's Missionary Union
YWA.....	Young Women's Auxiliary

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